

**Counterpart International – Afghanistan  
Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP)**

**Request for Applications (RFA)  
Regional Civic Engagement Grants (RCEG)**

<b>RFA Number:</b>	<b>RFA 16-14</b>
<b>Re-issuance Date of RFA:</b>	April 06, 2016
<b>Deadline for Submission of Questions:</b>	April 10, 2016 at 02:00 PM Kabul Time
<b>Emailing Date of Answers to Questions:</b>	April 11, 2016
<b>Application Submission Deadline Date:</b>	April 16, 2016 at 23:59 Kabul Time
<b>Projected Date of Grant Awards:</b>	On or about April 25, 2016

Dear CSO:

On behalf of the USAID-funded Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP), Counterpart International, Inc. (Counterpart) is pleased to inform you that your organization has been selected to apply for an Advance Plus Cost Reimbursement Grant, as described in this solicitation. Only Afghan civil society organizations (CSOs) operating at the regional level, holding valid registration certificates from the Ministry of Economy and/or the Ministry of Justice are eligible to apply for a Regional Civic Engagement Advance Plus Cost Reimbursement Grant.

Counterpart International anticipates awarding seven (7) Advance Plus Cost Reimbursement grants to Regional CSOs for a period of nine (9) months, and for up to AFN 888,000 (Eight Hundred and Eighty-Eight Thousand Afghani) per province. The anticipated start date of the Regional Civic Engagement Grants is on or about April 25, 2016.

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions contained in this solicitation.

**A. OBJECTIVE**

ACEP is soliciting applications from eligible Afghan Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to receive Regional Civic Engagement Grants (RCEGs) to implement programs that enable Afghan citizens to influence policies, monitor government accountability and serve as advocates for positive social change at the sub-national and national level.

The main objective of the RCEGs is to increase CSOs' engagement at the regional level in issues of national importance such as advancement of government accountability and transparency, improvement of public servant responsiveness, improving the work place for

women, and promoting enforcement of rule of law. The grants will help enable CSOs to play an interlocutory role between citizens and the National Unity Government (NUG). The goal is to support Afghan citizens to improve their capacity to influence local decisions and actions and have a voice in shaping policies at the national level.

One (1) RCEG will be awarded per region and fund activities in the following three (3) regions of Afghanistan under RFA 16-14:

1. Central Region: Kabul, Parwan, Bamyan, Daikundi
2. South East Region: Paktia, Paktika, and Khost
3. East Region: Logar, Nangarhar and Laghman

## **B. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

### **B.1 Background**

The Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP) is a five-year program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Counterpart International, Inc. (CPI), in partnership with Internews, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and the International Centre for Non-profit Law (ICNL). The goal of ACEP is to promote civil society and media engagement that enables Afghan citizens to influence policy, monitor government accountability, and serve as advocates for political reform. The program aims to achieve this goal through five program areas: (1) Regular Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) Engagement with Government; (2) Increased CSO and Media Thematic Expertise in Democracy and Governance; (3) Expanded Civic Engagement; (4) Improved Access to Independent News and Public Affairs Information, and (5) Increased CSO Organizational Capacity.

ACEP has been implemented since 2014 and thus far provided support to 12 Key CSO Partners and 130 Target CSOs in 22 provinces and more than 387 communities, and a total of 119,016 beneficiaries, out of whom 55,284 are female (of those, 33,874 are youth between 16-30 years old). In order to build on the project's success and continue its engagement with civil society organizations and citizens of Afghanistan, ACEP would like to expand its coverage to strengthen the link between the community, district, provincial, regional and national level CSOs.

In PY3, rather than working with 12 Key Partners and 130 Target CSOs, ACEP will work with three categories of CSOs, namely: Provincial CSO Partners (PCPs) (at least one per province), Regional Key Partners (RCPs) (7), and Kabul-based Key Partners (KBPs) (approximately 7). Regional Key Partners will mentor, train and support PCPs, while sector specific Kabul-based Key Partners will be responsible for engaging with the national government to influence policies, monitor government accountability and advocate for reforms.

Community, district and provincial dialogues will be held by PCPs, with the support of RCPs, to identify issues and challenges that could change for the better as a result of local advocacy. Issues not solved at the provincial and regional level, because they require solutions or policies at the national level, will be shared with the Kabul-based Key Partners.

In turn, they will engage with the national level government in Kabul to advocate for better policies, laws and reform. They will also help RCPs understand the legislative and policy initiatives and environment in Kabul so that, in turn, PCPs will better inform citizens in provinces and districts on approaches and initiatives they could take to influence the dialogue and decisions from the provincial to the national level.

Through the revised cascading model, ACEP will provide the opportunity for partner CSOs to work effectively with communities as well as with CSOs in other provinces and the government institutions at the sub-national and national levels. The new partnership model facilitates an appropriate channel of communication among CSOs through collaborative efforts and makes a practical link through which CSOs at the provincial level will work with their respective Regional Key Partners to support CSOs working at the national level.

The main purpose of the Regional Civic Engagement Grants (RCEG) is to increase CSO engagement at the sub-national level on issues of national importance such as: (1) advancement of government accountability and transparency; (2) helping citizens in communities be informed and have a voice on issues affecting them; (3) improving public servant responsiveness; (4) improving attitudes in the workplace related to acceptance of the working women and the awareness of the new anti-sexual harassment policies by the employees and employers; (5) promoting enforcement of rule of law; and (6) enabling CSOs to play an interlocutory role, as needed, between citizens and the National Unity Government (NUG).

Provincial CSO partners have already been identified. Some of the larger provinces have two provincial partners. The provincial partners will be trained by ACEP and the RCPs in a common curriculum with specific methodologies worked out between ACEP and the regional partners. The PCPs have identified deliverables for civic education in communities and community dialogues. In addition, they will be organizing advocacy committees, district dialogues, provincial dialogues and dialogues between women and mullahs.

It is anticipated that the following results/outcomes shall be achieved upon completion of the grant activities:

- Capacity of provincial CSOs will be improved in the areas of community mobilization, civic education, facilitating community dialogues, training and advocacy.
- Networking and collaboration among CSOs and other stakeholders focusing on issues affecting the people in the region will be improved at provincial and regional levels.
- Citizens' engagement in civic activities will be increased in the region.
- Local and national CSO and citizen linkages will be improved.

## **B.2 Regional CSO Partners (RCPs) RCEGs Activities/Outputs**

Regional CSO Partners selected under this grant will be located and active in the region they are applying for. They will be primarily responsible to train, coach, mentor, monitor and provide oversight to ACEP Provincial CSO Partners (PCPs) within their respective regions.

They will be expected to build the technical and functional capacity of provincial CSO partners to establish and reinforce strong relationships with citizens, build networks and raise the capacity of communities to advocate on issues that affect them. They will be expected to provide back-up technical support to provincial CSO partners in community mobilization, civic education, community, district and provincial dialogues. In short, the following are some major outcomes expected from the seven (7) Regional CSO recipients of the Regional Civic Engagement Grants:

1. Provincial CSO Partners are trained by the Regional Key Partners in Community Mobilization, Civic Education, facilitation of community dialogues, and advocacy after RCPs attend the Training of Trainers (ToT) provided by ACEP.
2. Provincial CSO Partners are able to operate effectively due to the ongoing on-the-job professional and technical training, technical assistance, coaching and mentoring provided by Regional CSO Partners.
3. The work and activities of PCPs were monitored for quality and effectiveness. Technical assistance (TA) was provided based on learnings from monitoring to improve capacity and implementation of activities by PCPs.
4. Strong working relationships developed by Regional CSO Partners with provincial governments and public institutions in their respective regions.
5. Reports and feedback from advocacy at the provincial and national levels are provided back to communities on initiatives that affect the communities.
6. Communities are able to identify issues, develop advocacy campaigns and carry them out due to the help and mentoring they received from PCPs and RCPs.
7. Provincial partners in the region are appropriately linked/connected and work with public institutions, other civil society organizations, communities and other stakeholders to build understanding and solidarity for action to advocate for issues identified at the community level.
8. PCPs supported by RCPs organized provincial dialogues to identify issues at the community level for local action, and for further discussion, action and advocacy at the provincial level. The issues and challenges identified during provincial and regional dialogues, by Provincial Partners and Regional Key Partners respectively, will be shared with the Kabul-based Key Partners, who will then engage with the national level government in Kabul to further advocate for political reforms at the national level when necessary.
9. Regional level meetings convened to discuss common issues of interest for all provinces in the region. The regional meeting provided opportunities for provincial CSOs to build networks, develop a regional perspective in looking at local issues and develop regional and national linkages.
10. Common advocacy issues are identified and joint advocacy action plans are developed with other regional and provincial CSOs.
11. Findings of the various dialogues are analyzed, synthesized and reported to the ACEP team and used by ACEP to inform planned/needed technical assistance (TA) and/or training.
12. RCPs and Provincial partners provide high quality reports to the ACEP team.
13. RCPs partnered closely with ACEP/CPI to coordinate strategies, trainings, TA, solutions to problems, successes and monitoring.

14. RCPs have developed a working relationship and regular communication with ACEP Kabul-based partners and established bridges between ACEP PCPs and Kabul-based Partners.

Successful RCP grantees will be based and active in the regions they apply for. They will be experienced CSOs as project implementers, trainers, mentors and guides. They will be versatile, learning organizations that are not afraid to admit when they are not successful. They learn from success and failure and celebrate the successes of others.

**Note:** Regional CSO partners must ensure gender integration in all aspects of organizational development, capacity building efforts, program staff and program development and implementation. Not only will gender be integrated programmatically, there should be a sensitivity to how (methodologies, attitudes, questions, approaches, etc.) the organization's/individual's interactions, interventions and TA facilitate and impact gender attitudes and treatment either positively or negatively. Regional CSO partners must ensure that women have equal access to and share equally in the benefits provided by program efforts.

**Note: Counterpart will not fund activities that are described as banned activities by the NGO Law and other Laws of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (Article 8).**

## **Grant Selection Process**

### **1. Questions & Answers**

Questions regarding the RFA or the procurement process must be submitted in writing to [applications.acep@counterpart.org](mailto:applications.acep@counterpart.org) with subject line: "Question RFA 16-14 Regional Civic Engagement Grants (RCEG)" by no later than **April 10, 2016 02:00 PM (Kabul time)**.

All Questions collected & Answers (Q&A) will be emailed to the applicants **on April 11, 2016**.

**During this solicitation process, interested applicants may not contact, speak with or ask questions of any Counterpart ACEP staff outside of the Orientation Session. Any contact is grounds for disqualification of the organization's application.**

### **2. Application Requirements**

**NOTES:** Most of the forms referenced below and attached are new or revised. You must use the forms attached with this RFA. Do not use old forms from previous RFAs or from other donors.

The maximum length of the Proposal is 10 (ten) pages. THE MAXIMUM TOTAL number of pages is 10, not counting the cover page, list of projects and log frame. Anything beyond 10 pages will NOT be read by the Grant Technical Evaluation Committee (GTEC) members and therefore not be considered in the scoring.

Responses to this RFA must be submitted in English and contain the following documents:

Technical Proposal (Using Attachment A1, Proposal)

The following information must be addressed in the Technical Proposal:

1. Legal, Registered Name of the Organization and its Acronym.
2. Contact information (Address, Telephone number; E-mail and Website address).
3. Name, position and contact information of the Official Organizational Representative.
4. The grant application/proposal should address the questions in Attachment A1. The proposal should provide a clear understanding of the work to be undertaken and the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved.
5. A description and list of the CSO's civic engagement and government monitoring activities completed in the past three years, including;
  - organizing civic education training/sessions,
  - community mobilization,
  - awareness raising,
  - advocacy for policy based on lessons learned
  - efforts that enhanced citizen participation in civic activities,
  - increased citizen engagement in decision-making processes,
  - increased citizen networking/coalition for making positive social change,
  - activities that demonstrate CSO's capacity to provide technical assistance,
  - mentoring,
  - capacity building to other CSO.

Please include a brief description of the main sources of funding for the organization (amounts of funding, duration, donor, name and objective of the project, current active grants).

6. A description of how civic engagement and policy advocacy activities are aligned with the organization's mission and core competencies.
7. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) is a global human rights challenge that preys upon the vulnerable, breaks down rule of law, and corrupts global commerce. It involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of exploitation in forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation. Victims are often children and women. In 2012, USAID launched a Counter-Trafficking in Persons (C-TIP) Policy to emphasize the importance of new technologies and innovative approaches to fight trafficking. As a result, CSOs are asked to describe how they will integrate C-TIP efforts in the proposed activities.
8. A description of how the CSO will integrate gender and youth in the proposed activities.
9. More than one example of previous monitoring and evaluation activities by the organization and what indicators and tools were used to monitor and evaluate previous projects, and what, if any, corrective action was taken to improve the project/s. Description of how learning in one project informed the planning and



implementation in another project.

10. A description of the sustainability of the impacts as well as the steps taken by your organization to ensure project sustainability.
11. A description of how the project will be managed and operated. Include an organizational chart (or the structure of the organization) and CVs of key personnel.
12. A description of the project stakeholders (i.e. other CSOs, Provincial Councils, provincial authorities, district authorities, CDCs) and provincial partners and describe their proposed involvement in the project implementation. Provide examples of how you have effectively worked with stakeholders to make a positive impact on a target in the past.

#### Work Plan (Using Attachment A2, Work Plan)

1. Develop a Work Plan in Excel format, using the template provided in Attachment A2. Please note the “Sample Work Plan” tab included in the template for applicants to refer to when developing their work plans.
2. In the first month there will be an orientation by ACEP/CPI and also training and planning. In the second month, the RCPs will do the training and planning with the PCPs.

#### Budget and Budget Narrative (Using Attachments B1, Budget and B2, Budget Narrative)

1. Using Attachment B1, please develop a Budget in an amount **not to exceed AFN 888,000 per province**. Please note the Sample Budget tab including in the template that shows what the budget should look like. Please ensure that only costs that are directly related to the grant activities are budgeted. Indirect costs are not allowed under this Program. The budget should reflect all the resources necessary for project implementation. Budgets are to be developed based on the specific needs associated with the applicant’s proposed activities.
2. Please develop a Budget Narrative using the template provided in Attachment B2. The budget narrative should provide details on all types of costs planned, cost per unit and cost justification.

#### Cost Share Requirement and Plan

In order to be considered for a Grant, applicants are required to secure either cash or goods/services (referred to as “in-kind”) to contribute to the grant activities. This cost share contribution must come from other, non-US Government related sources of funding. The cost share contribution requirement is a minimum of 5% of the value of the grant. Please refer to Attachment C for Cost Share Guidelines. Applicants must complete and attach to the Application a Cost Share Planning Worksheet, per Attachment C that demonstrates how the organization plans to meet this cost share requirement either in cash or in kind and what percentage of cost share they are proposing. The minimum requirement is 5% but special consideration shall be given to sound cost share plans that propose a higher cost share. Please note that if awarded, the proposed cost share becomes a contractual commitment that the organization must meet within the effective dates of the grant.

Required Documents to Attach as Part of the Application. If these are not included, the proposal will not be read, scored or considered.

1. Copy of the Registration Certificate
2. Copy of the Organization's Charter or Document of Incorporation or Organization's bylaws
3. Organization's most recent annual financial statement and audit report for the most recent year
4. The Cost Share Worksheet
5. Organizational chart outlining the staffing structure by name and title and showing the number of staff employed. CVs of the key staff.
6. A copy of the receipt from the Ministry of Economy of the CSO biannual report to the Ministry/Department of Economy

**An application containing all of the required information in the above Application Requirements shall be considered a complete application. If one of the documents is missing, the application will not be considered as complete and therefore not be read or scored.**

### **3. Deadline Date for Responding to this RFA**

Complete Applications should be emailed to [applications.acep@counterpart.org](mailto:applications.acep@counterpart.org). The email and attachment total size should not exceed 20 MB. If needed, an application may be submitted through multiple emails. Please include in the submission email the following subject line: **RFA 16-14 Regional Civic Education Grants (RCEG)**.

**The deadline for submitting Complete Applications is April 16, 2016, 23:59 PM Kabul Time.**

**LATE OR INCOMPLETE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.**

Applications and accompanying documentation will not be returned.

All applicants will be notified on outcome once the grant recipients are determined.

### **4. Applications Evaluation Process**

Only complete applications received by the Application Submission Deadline Date will be accepted and submitted to the Grant Technical Evaluation Committee (GTEC) for review. GTEC members, Counterpart technical staff from different departments with ACEP, will thoroughly review and evaluate the applications in accordance with application evaluation procedures.



Applications will be reviewed based on the following evaluation criteria:

<b>Application Technical Aspects for Selection</b>	<b>Scoring</b>
1. Relevance of the proposed project to the key purpose of the Regional Civic Engagement Grant (RCEG). Description of region and issues in region. Description of advocacy activities, initiatives and impact.	<b>10</b>
2. Organization’s ability to successfully implement the proposed activities. Relevant previous experience including list of grants obtained in the last three years. Alignment with charter. Experience of key personnel. Partnerships.	<b>25</b>
3. Relevance and suitability of planned activities and expected result to achieve project objectives related to the thematic areas described in the RFA. Management plan. Implementation plan.	<b>25</b>
4. Project methodology and sustainability potential. Understanding of how change takes place. Monitoring organization and learning.	<b>17</b>
5. Project activities demonstrated gender, disabled, C-TIP and youth mainstreaming. Understanding of how activities impact gender.	<b>8</b>
6. Budget reasonableness and cost effectiveness; included a minimum cost share contribution of 5%	<b>15</b>
<b>Maximum Score</b>	<b>100</b>

Using the above evaluation criteria, GTEC members will score and rank each application and recommend the top three (3) for funding.

As applicable, GTEC may request CSOs to provide additional information and refine their proposals within an established deadline for re-submission of a revised application.

The selected applications will undergo a pre-award risk assessment. Per the results of the pre-award assessment, the grantees will be submitted to USAID for approval (including vetting approval). Once approval is obtained, ACEP will finalize negotiations and issue the final advance plus cost reimbursement agreements to the selected CSOs.

#### **5. Subgrant Agreement Award and Payments:**

Up to three (3) advance plus cost reimbursement type subgrant agreements will be issued for the Regional Civic Engagement Grants (RCEGs) for nine (9) months (ending December 31, 2016) and up to 888,000 (Eight Hundred Eighty-Eight Thousand Afghani) per province.

An initial advance based on the first three months of projected costs will be issued to the subrecipient after signing by both parties of the subgrant agreement and receipt of the three- month cost projection based on the approved budget. Subsequent advances will be made on a monthly basis upon receipt of the monthly financial report for the previous month and submission of the projected costs for the next two months of activities, based on the work plan and budget. Continuous payment of advances will be strictly contingent upon Counterpart’s monthly monitoring of subgrantee’s satisfactory performance and accomplishment of project activities, and timely and accurate submission of monthly programmatic and financial reports submitted by the subgrantee.

Grantees will be expected to complete a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan that will be included in the final subagreement.

### **Disclaimers**

*Please note that the issuance of this Request for Application does not constitute a commitment on the part of Counterpart International, Inc. for funding or an award.*

*All costs associated in the preparation and submission of a proposal in response to this RFA shall be the sole responsibility of the applicant.*

### **RFA Enclosures:**

- Attachment A1: ACEP Proposal Template
- Attachment A2: ACEP Work Plan Template
- Attachment B1: ACEP Budget Template
- Attachment B2: ACEP Budget Narrative Template
- Attachment C: Cost Share Guidelines
  - Appendix A – Cost Share Plan Worksheet
  - Appendix B – Cost Share Certification
  - Appendix C – Cost Share Report