

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT CENTER
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Funding Opportunity Title: Safeguarding Critical Resources and National Sovereignty

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0008036

Deadline for Applications: June 25, 2020, at 11:30:00 PM EDT

CFDA Number: 19.700 – General Assistance Programs

Total Amount Available: \$350,000

Maximum for Each Award: \$350,000

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE GEC

As mandated by law, the Global Engagement Center (GEC) directs, leads, synchronizes, integrates, and coordinates efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and foreign non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining or influencing the policies, security, or stability of the United States and United States allies and partner nations. GEC carries out eleven specific functions, among them to lead, direct, synchronize, integrate, and coordinate international efforts to track and evaluate counterfactual narratives abroad that threaten the policies, security, or stability of the United States and United States allies and partner nations.

This is a Notice of Funding Opportunity, outlining the goals and objectives and the procedures for submitting requests for funding. Please carefully follow all instructions below to be considered for this solicitation process.

A. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1. Summary:

This will be a single-stage competitive process. Interested applicants will submit a full proposal addressing the proposed program objective. Proposals will be evaluated and scored by a merit review panel.

The PRC is continuing to blur the lines between private and public sector while attempting to diversify accepted standards in the international community. The creation of organizations posing as legitimate private sector actors, which in reality exist as PRC fronts, threatens to undermine international standards and U.S. interests, particularly when these efforts target critical resources and their supply chains – such as in the power, natural resource, and extractive sectors. For instance, the PRC is pairing its industrial policy directive to dominate energy transition technologies and ultra high voltage transmission lines in the electricity sector with the advancement of the Global Energy Interconnection initiative (GEI). This agenda seeks to establish the PRC as the driver of international electricity market integration and interconnection with an emphasis on utilization of PRC standards and technologies and involvement of PRC state owned enterprises (SOEs). The Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation

Organization (GEIDCO) is one example of a PRC organization established to further advance GEI, and which has approached the governments in key markets – such as in Latin America – with offers of technical assistance in electricity infrastructure. PRC SOEs' direct investment in transmission and distribution sectors in foreign electricity markets also creates vulnerabilities and leads to greater control over electrical grid infrastructure, which poses significant risks to U.S. interests by enabling enhanced PRC leverage over U.S. partners and allies, data acquisition capabilities, information and communication systems access, grid remote access and control tools.

Another example comes from the mining sector: the China Chamber of Commerce of Metals, Minerals and Chemicals Importers and Exporters (CCCIM) recently hosted the 2020 International Forum on Sustainable Mineral Supply Chains, at which the CCCIM aimed to attract foreign partners to cooperate on a new global governance system for the mineral sector and frame Beijing as a responsible, sustainable development partner, despite numerous examples globally of problematic PRC behavior in the mining sector and the PRC's demonstrated willingness to leverage supply chain dominance over other countries to advance its strategic and economic interests.

The PRC also seeks to influence environmental standards through its One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. Critical resource development projects, especially in the energy sector, have been central to PRC OBOR efforts. The PRC highlights its supposed commitment to green and sustainable development through OBOR, including through a January 2021 white paper on PRC international development cooperation that claims the PRC, "has proactively assisted other developing countries in promoting new energy, protecting the environment, and addressing climate change." Yet the PRC has shown a continued willingness to finance projects with weak environmental safeguards and inadequate environmental risk assessment practices, undermining PRC rhetoric. PRC companies and investors sometimes fund projects that do not meet the PRC's domestic environmental standards or those of international financial institutions. A key example is the PRC's continued willingness to fund coal projects, even as multilateral development banks have begun phasing out or banning direct coal financing. According to the Global Energy Monitor, the PRC is the top government funder of coal plant projects globally, financing over \$50 billion in coal plant projects internationally. According to Boston University's Global Development Policy Center, the largest share (over 40%) of PRC policy banks' overseas energy financing went to coal projects in 2018.

The GEC seeks proposals from interested organizations to write a report which 1) identifies critical resource markets where the PRC is using disinformation, misinformation, or propaganda to undermine transparent, rule-based commercial efforts; 2) exposes how the PRC is conducting its disinformation efforts in these sectors; and 3) proposes recommendations regarding how to best combat these efforts. The report should include case studies that compare and contrast specific investments by allies and adversaries intended to strengthen good critical resource governance, protect sovereignty of resources, and offer long-term benefits to local communities. Case studies are not limited by geography or income but should include countries involved in

upstream or midstream critical resource supply chains and which are targeted by—or at risk of being targeted by—PRC disinformation/misinformation campaigns.

The report should at a minimum be written in English, with translation into key local languages of case study countries preferred. Additional language translations could be considered for other key markets. The implementer will be responsible for online/print distribution of the report, case studies and any best practices or recommendations, as well as virtual training events (or in-person events, should health, safety, and travel restrictions allow) for relevant officials, civil society leaders, and other stakeholders responsible for protecting global supply chains.

The GEC proposes to award one cooperative agreement through this NOFO. Experience in extractive or other critical resource policy is preferred. Awardees and their partners should have recent prior experience and/or extensive networks in subject matter in one or more of the proposed pilot countries; physical presence in target countries is preferred.

Project Goal

Strengthen local influencers' and decision makers' capacity to withstand manipulative disinformation and misinformation practices.

Project Objectives

- 1) Create a report that proactively assesses where PRC disinformation campaign efforts pose the greatest threat to critical resources and their supply chains
- 2) Disseminate analyses through a sustained roll-out plan to encourage target countries to recommit to existing governance models

Project Outputs

- A publicly available report that includes:
 - Analyses on which critical resource sectors and countries are most vulnerable to PRC disinformation efforts. Critical resources include, but are not limited to, the following spaces: the power sector, upstream and midstream extractive sectors, and water.
 - Case studies
- End products translated into appropriate languages (preferred, but not required)
- Dissemination and Outreach: the grantee will develop and execute an outreach plan that includes at minimum one roll-out event per case study and could also include briefings, social media promotion, interviews, and other public engagements.

Project Outcome

Target audiences have access to training, case studies and best practices, strengthening local capacity to establish and maintain diverse critical mineral sources and supply chains from undue foreign influence.

2. Participants and Audiences:

In this announcement, GEC seeks to support a project that strengthens local capacity to establish and maintain diverse critical mineral sources and supply chains against undue foreign influence. The target audiences for the deliverable will include national regional and local governments, industry, labor organizations, non-governmental organizations, and journalists responsible for reporting on impact investing, so-called “green economy” manufacturing, industry forecasting, and mineral/human rights issues to ensure transparency. These target audiences should include those from both donor countries who have built existing governance frameworks as well as case study supply chain countries who have active or exploratory mining sectors. The deliverables should be translated in local language(s) of the host nation, where appropriate, to increase reach and resonance.

The following activities and costs are **not covered** under this announcement:

- Social welfare projects;
- Paying to complete activities begun with other funds (however, new activities that build from lessons learned as the result of an earlier project are acceptable);
- Activities that appear partisan or that support individual or party electoral campaigns;
- Exchange programs (however, reasonable international travel incidental to the accomplishment of program objectives will be considered);
- One-time events, such as stand-alone conferences and one-off round tables (however, a series of workshops within a larger programmatic concept are acceptable);
- Medical research and clinical studies;
- Cultural presentations, cultural research, cultural clubs, or festivals, etc.; and
- Entertainment (e.g., social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, guided tours).

Authorizing legislation, type and year of funding: Any grants and/or cooperative agreements made as a result of this solicitation will be funded by FY2020 Economic Support Funds through the Countering Chinese Influence Fund (CCIF), as authorized by the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (as amended), and are subject to the statutory limitations of such funding.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type: Cooperative Agreement

Estimated Number of Awards: 1

Estimated Total Program Funding: \$350,000

Estimated Award Ceiling: \$350,000

Estimated Award Floor: \$350,000

Length of Project Period: 12 months

Anticipated program start date: September 2021

This notice is subject to availability of funding. The U.S. government reserves the right to make an award in excess of the award ceiling and the right to make an award below the floor outlined in this notice. The U.S. government also reserves the right to award funding to applicants under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the application deadline.

Funding Instrument Type: Cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements are different from grants in that U.S. government involvement in cooperative agreement implementation is considered substantial. Substantial involvement in this program will include but may not be limited to: identification and selection of sub-recipients and beneficiaries, program country selection, training curriculum review and approval, approval of social media content, ability to quality-control any deliverables, development of robust Monitoring and Evaluation plans for each deliverable and in aggregate across the project, and re-scoping the geographic/activity selection if security, health, or travel conditions require changes.

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be planned for completion in twelve months from the start date of the award. GEC will entertain applications for continuation funding under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to: 1) availability of funds; 2) satisfactory progress of the program; and 3) a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

The GEC may make awards through this solicitation to U.S. and foreign non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, and commercial entities. Individuals, state and local governments, foreign public entities, and public international organizations are not eligible to apply. Before submitting, potential applicants should ensure that they are eligible to receive a grant or cooperative agreement and prepared to adhere to the terms of and [2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 600](#).

GEC welcomes applications irrespective of an applicant's race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing is encouraged but not required.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

Applicants may submit one proposal. If more than one proposal is submitted from an organization, all proposals from that organization will be considered ineligible for funding.

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet, as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 for information on how to obtain these registrations.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Application Package

Application forms required below are available through SAMS Domestic.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Content of Application

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars
- All pages are numbered
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper, and
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

The following documents are **required**:

1. Mandatory application forms

- **SF-424** (*Application for Federal Assistance – organizations*)
- **SF424A** (*Budget Information for Non-Construction programs*)
- **SF424B** (*Assurances for Non-Construction programs*) (*Note: Form SF424B is not required if an organization has renewed its SAM.gov registration since February 2nd, 2019*)

2. Summary Coversheet: Cover sheet stating the applicant name and organization, proposal date, program title, program period proposed start and end date, and brief purpose of the program.

3. Proposal (20 pages maximum): The proposal should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

- **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact.

- **Introduction to the Organization applying:** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program, including relevant information on previous grants from the State Department and/or U.S. government agencies.
- **Program Objectives and Outcomes:** The objectives describe what the program is intended to achieve. The outcomes refer to the intermediate accomplishments such as changes in attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, or sentiment among the audience or participants. These changes should be logical steps toward achieving the program objectives. These objectives and outcomes should be specific, achievable, and measurable.
- **Program Activities:** Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the outcomes and objectives. Each activity should be clearly linked to advancing an identified project objective or outcome. A schedule or Gantt chart of activities should also be included.
- **Key Personnel:** Names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. What proportion of their time will be used in support of this program?
- **Program Partners (if applicable):** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees.
- **Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** The Monitoring and Evaluation plan should include a Theory of Change (ToC); a Logical Framework which details the goals of the project, the (SMART) objectives of the project and the results-based outcomes, outputs, activities, risks, and assumptions that achieve each objective; and an Indicator Reference Sheet which details the indicators to measure performance and impact; and a Monitoring and Evaluation Narrative which explains how the suggested M&E plan will be implemented.

4. Budget Justification Narrative: After filling out the SF-424A Budget (above), use a separate sheet of paper to describe each of the budget expenses in detail. See section *H. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions* below for further information.

5. Attachments

- 1-page CV or resume of key personnel who are proposed for the program
- **If applicable**, letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner
- **If applicable**, official permission letters from relevant government agencies

Please note: Other items NOT required for submission but which may be requested if your application is selected to move forward in the review process include:

- Copies of an organization or program audit within the last two (2) years
- Copies of relevant human resources, financial, or procurement policies
- Copies of other relevant organizational policies or documentation that would help the Department determine your organization's capacity to manage a federal grant award overseas
- Completion of a pre-award organizational information sheet to determine what financial controls and standard operating procedures an organization uses to procure goods and

services, hire staff and track time and attendance, pay for grant-related travel, and execute other financial transactions that may be necessary to undertake the activities in your application

- GEC reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial information regarding the proposal.

3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Required Registrations:

All organizations applying for grants must obtain these registrations. All are free of charge:

- Unique Identifier Number from Dun & Bradstreet (DUNS number)
- NCAGE/CAGE code
- www.SAM.gov registration
- SAMS Domestic Registration

Step 1: Apply for a DUNS number and an NCAGE or CAGE number (these can be completed simultaneously)

DUNS application: Organizations must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet, if your organization does not have one already, you may obtain one by calling 1-866-705-5711 or visiting:

<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do;jsessionid=81407B1F03F2BDB123DD47D19158B75F>. <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>

NCAGE application: Application page here

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/scage/CageList.aspx>

Instructions for the NCAGE application process:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/Docs/US%20Instructions%20for%20NSPA%20NCAGE.pdf>

For help from within the U.S., call 1-888-227-2423

For help from outside the U.S., call 1-269-961-7766

Email NCAGE@dliis.dla.mil for any problems in getting an NCAGE code.

Step 2: After receiving the NCAGE Code, proceed to register in SAM by logging onto: <https://www.sam.gov>. SAM registration must be renewed annually.

State Award Management System (SAMS Domestic) Registration:

The Department of State's State Award Management System (SAMS Domestic) provides the only portal through which applications to this opportunity will be accepted. Please refer to the SAMS Portal Info for Applicants pdf, included with this opportunity, for instructions on how to register for SAMS Domestic. Please note: Although this

opportunity will be published on grants.gov, all applications must be submitted through the SAMS Domestic portal. Applications may not be submitted through grants.gov.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be time stamped before June 25, 2020, at 11:30:00 PM EDT. **There will be no grace period, and any application not received by the application deadline will not be considered.**

GEC encourages applicants not to wait until the final day of the competition to submit. Early submission provides time for applicants to alert GEC (gec-programs@state.gov) of any technical difficulties, affording sufficient time to resolve difficulties before the deadline. Although GEC will work with applicants to resolve technical issues, it is not in a position to grant exceptions to the submission requirements, notably the submission deadline, as outlined in this announcement.

5. Funding Restrictions

Alcoholic Beverages: Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.

6. Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted electronically through the State Award Management System.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below. The criteria listed are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of an application.

Organizational capacity and record on previous grants (25 points): The organization has expertise in its stated field and the GEC's confidence in the applicant's ability to undertake the program. This includes a financial management system and a bank account. The organization also demonstrates previous relevant experience of either itself or its partners.

Quality and feasibility of the program idea, including extent to which it leverages existing networks (30 points): The proposed project relies on a clearly-articulated and well-founded theory of change. The program plan is well developed, with detail about how program activities will be carried out and responds to the objectives outlined in the solicitation. It is clearly and accurately written, substantive, and sufficiently detailed. The program plan adheres to the program overview and guidelines described above.

Ability to achieve program objectives (15 points): Goals and objectives are clearly stated, and the program approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results. Objectives are reasonable and feasible. The application clearly demonstrates how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. Proposed personnel, institutional resources, and

partner organizations are adequate and appropriate to achieve the program goals. The proposal includes a clearly-articulated, well-founded, and actionable theory of change.

Reasonable budget with comprehensive narrative (20 points): The budget justification is detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities.

Monitoring and evaluation plan (10 points): Proposals should include a theory of change as well as clear objectives, outcomes, outputs, and activities organized in a logical framework. The theory of change should be a brief if/then statement that describes why the proposed program is expected to achieve the anticipated results among the target audience. To explain how the applicant proposes to achieve the project's results and meet the objectives, the proposal should describe the activities of the proposed program, the expected outputs (goods, services, or deliverables) from those activities, and the expected outcomes (how those activities will achieve the objective). Additionally, some forethought should be given to cost-effective indicators that will measure the outcomes and outputs.

2. Review and Selection Process

A Merit Review Panel will evaluate all eligible applications based on the above criteria. Once the merit review process is completed, unsuccessful applicants can request a debrief based on the review committee's feedback on their proposal.

3. Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)

- i. The Department of State, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);
- ii. An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM;
- iii. The Department of State will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the GEC Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the recipient for review and counter-signature. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

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

Payment Method: Payments under any awards made as a result of this solicitation will be processed through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS).

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Terms and Conditions: Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include: 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 600, Certifications and Assurances, and the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, all of which are available at: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>.

3. Reporting

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify the frequency of required reporting.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact GEC at: GEC-Programs@state.gov. A Q&A document will be posted as an attachment to this notice on SAMS Domestic. Questions must be submitted 30 days in advance of the submission deadline.

Note: We do not provide any pre-consultation for application related questions that are addressed in the NOFO. Once an application has been submitted, State Department officials and staff—both in the Department and at embassies overseas—may not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process is completed.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Conflict of Interest

In accordance with applicable Federal awarding agency policy, applicants must disclose in writing any potential conflict of interest to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity.

Applicant Vetting

Applicants are advised that proposals will be evaluated against the potential risk that federal funds may inadvertently be passed to the wrong hands and that funds may benefit terrorists groups or their supporters. Applicants may be asked to submit information required by DS Form 4184, Risk Analysis Information, about their company and its principal personnel. Vetting information is also required for all sub-award performance on assistance awards identified by DOS as presenting a risk of terrorist financing. When vetting information is requested by the Grants Officer, information may be submitted on the secure web portal at:

<https://ramportal.state.gov>, via Email to RAM@state.gov, or hardcopy to the Grants Officer

Questions about the form may be emailed to RAM@state.gov. Failure to submit information when requested, or failure to pass vetting, may be grounds for rejecting your proposal.

Marking Policy

Applicants are advised that recipients and sub-recipients of Federal assistance awards are subject to the State Department's Marking Policy. More information on this policy can be found on:

<https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Personnel: Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the program, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the program.

Fringe benefits: Calculate any allocable fringe benefits for personnel to be working directly on the program. Fringe benefits must be justified by an organization's written HR policies or NICRA.

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program. If the program involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

Equipment: Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property that is required for the program, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least \$5,000 per unit.

Supplies: List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the program. If an item costs more than \$5,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

Contractual: Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. This includes independent consultants. Also describe any sub-awards to partners that will help carry out a substantial portion of the scope of work.

Other Direct Costs: Describe any other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All “Other” or “Miscellaneous” expenses must be itemized and explained.

Indirect Costs: These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of 10% of the modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68. For-profit entities with a formally established overhead rate may apply that rate.

“Cost Sharing” refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers’ time and donated venues.