INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS (IFES)

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) for
Strengthening Media Literacy in the Mekong Region (Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam)**

RFA-21-051

July 15, 2021

1. Request for Application (RFA)

1.1. Purpose
The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to invite civil society organization(s) to submit applications to implement a project that will strengthen media literacy and improve access to information for marginalized groups in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam The objective of this project is to counter COVID-19 related disinformation through media literacy programs for their communities.The RFA provides prospective organizations with the relevant operational and performance requirements. IFES anticipates issuing multiple awards under this RFA.

1.2. RFA Schedule
IFES will conduct a competitive process to identify grantees per the tentative timeline below:

Issuance of RFA	July 15, 2021
Questions Due	July 21,2021 by 17:00 Washington DC (EST)
Response from IFES	July 23,2021
RFA Closes—All Applications Due	August 15, 2021 by 17:00 Washington DC (EST)
Anticipated Implementation Period	September, 2021

2. General Information

2.1. Background
IFES is an independent, non-governmental organization the provides support to advance the rights of all people to have a voice in decision-making . Our independent expertise strengthens democractic systems and builds local capacity to deliver sustainable solutions.

As the global leader in democracy promotion, we advance good governance and democratic rights by providing technical assistance to, empowering persons who identify with underrepresented or marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities, young people and ethnic minorities, to participate in electoral and political processes and applying field-based research to improve the electoral cycle.

Since 1987, IFES has worked in over 145 countries – from developing democracies, to mature democracies.

3. Application Preparation Instructions

3.1. Applicant's Understanding of the RFA
In responding to this RFA, the applicant accepts full responsibility to understand the RFA in its entirety, and in detail, including making any inquiries to IFES as necessary to gain such understanding. IFES reserves the right to disqualify any applicant who demonstrates less than such understanding. Further, IFES reserves the right to determine, at its sole discretion, whether the applicant has demonstrated such understanding. Such disqualification and/or cancellation shall be at no fault, cost, or liability whatsoever to IFES.

3.2. Good Faith Statement
All information provided by IFES in this RFA is offered in good faith. Individual items are subject to change at any time. IFES makes no certification that any item is without error. IFES is not responsible or liable for any use of the information or for any claims asserted there from.

3.3. Communication
Verbal communication shall not be effective unless formally confirmed in writing by the IFES officials identified in Section 3.5 of this RFA. In no case shall verbal communication govern over

written communication.

3.3.1. Applicant Inquiries

Inquiries, questions, and requests for clarification related to this RFA should be submitted in writing to the representative listed below by the deadline listed in 1.2. RFA Schedule.

Name		**Name**
Abdullah Abdullah	**and**	Khurram Naz
aabdullah@ifes.org		knaz@ifes.org

Questions/Answers and Addenda(s) related to this RFA can be found on IFES Procurement Notices and www.devex.com.

3.3.2. Formal Communications shall include, but are not limited to:

- Questions concerning this RFA
- Expressions of Interest
- Pre-award negotiations under this RFA
- Addenda to this RFA

3.3.3. Addenda

IFES will make a good-faith effort to provide written responses to the questions or requests for clarifications that require addenda by the date set in the RFA Schedule above. All questions, answers, and addenda will be shared with all interested organizations.

3.4. Eligibility

Locally registered Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Non-Political Party Organizations, or other similar not-for-profit institutions are invited to apply. If a DPO, CSO, or NGO is not locally registered, a signed letter stating the reason they are not registered must be included as part of the application.

Individuals and the following organizations are not eligible to access funding:
- Governmental and semi-governmental institutions
- International organizations
- Political parties or organizations affiliated with or engaging in partisan activities
- Organizations running on a for-profit basis

3.5. Application Instructions

All applications should include the following, in order for their application to be considered:

3.5.1. Technical Application

The Technical Application must include a written application in English describing in detail the applicant's (a) Technical Approach, (b) implementation timeline, and (c) results framework to implement the Program Description as described in Article 4 of this RFA. The evaluation criteria can be found in Article 3.6. Applicants should use the technical narrative template in Attachment A. All documents will be made available accessible in both PDF and Word.

3.5.2. Cost Application – Budget & Budget Narrative

- The Budget should reflect costs associated with the technical activities and deliverables. All applicants must use the budget template provided in Attachment B and submit it in Excel format as part of their application. The Budget should be presented in dollars with applicable taxes/charges clearly identified. Unit costs are required and, in the case of discrepancies between unit costs and total costs, the unit cost will be taken as the reference basis in the evaluation.

- The applicant must agree to keep these costs valid for a minimum of 90 calendar days.
- The Cost Application should include a Budget Narrative that describes each cost element of the Budget (see column H of Attachment B).

3.5.3. A brief outline of the applicant's organization and experience.

Organizations should demonstrate prior experience working with diverse communities such as women, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals, elderly and transient communities facilitating training programs, and working on programming such as media literacy, disinformation and capacity building.

3.5.4. Additional documentation

- When available, a copy of the organization's most recent final, signed audits/financial statements
- Proof of organization's registration or a signed letter indicating why the organization is not registered.
- CVs of key personnel including the organization's Director and anticipated program manager
- Any other supporting document that will strengthen the application

3.6. Application Submission

Applicants must send final applications in electronic copy ia e-mail to the point of contact identified in *3.3.1* on or prior to the closing date and time shown in the *Schedule of Events*.

3.7. Criteria for Selection

The evaluation of each response to this RFA will be based on its demonstrated competence, compliance, format, and organization. The purpose of this RFA is to identify those organizations that have the interest, capability, and financial strength to implement the project as described in Article 4 of this RFA.

1. **Technical Approach, Implementation Timeline, Results Framework   40 points**
   - Demonstrated understanding of the RFA and of IFES' requirements
   - Soundness and feasibility of technical approach
   - Reasonable implementation timeline and results framework

2. **Competitive Budget with efficient and reasonable cost structure   30 points**
   - Cost realism in response to RFA requirements
   - Clear budget presentation of necessary, allocable and reasonable costs
   - Appropriate balance of budget between operational/personnel costs and activity costs

3. **Past Performance and Organizational Capacity   30 points**
   - Extent to which proposed personnel have relevant qualifications and experience
   - Demonstrated capacity to organize, manage and implement full range of activities required to achieve program goals and objectives
   - Demonstrated flexibility to adjust implementation in response to changing environments
   - Demonstrated strong past performance in implementing programs of similar size, scope and complexity
   - Demonstrated presence and/or networks in the proposed target districts

3.8. Selection and Notification

Applicants determined by IFES that possess the capacity to compete for this project will be

selected to move into the negotiation phase of this process. Written notification will be sent to these applicants via e-mail. Those applicants not selected for the negotiation phase will also be notified.

4. Scope of Work

Disinformation campaigns emerging around the COVID-19 pandemic, threaten the health and safety of individuals across Southeast Asia, especially the Mekong region. Strengthening sub-regional resilience is an importance step to counter this trend. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) is seeking a civil society organization (CSO) partner to work with marginalized communities to increase media literacy and counter the spread of COVID-19 disinformation. Through this program, the partner will roll out an online course, which will be developed by IFES' with support from the partner, on countering online disinformation and hate speech around the COVID-19 crisis.

Hate speech, which targets persons on the basis of their identity or identities, increases the discrimination against persons who identify with marginalized groups. This program will target several marginalized communities disproportionally impacted by COVID-19 disinformation including women, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+), elderly and individuals from transient communities including migrant workers and displaced individuals. Applicants can select up to two target audiences and must outline which audience they will engage in their proposal and provide a justification for their selection.

The implementing partner will implement the program through the following activities:

a. Work collaboratively with IFES to provide input and expertise in developing a curriculum to increase media literacy and counter COVID-19 related disinformation and hate speech, which will target identified marginalized groups as outlined above.
b. Identify participants of the media literacy learning program from the proposed marginalized community.
c. Lead multi-day trainings in Thailand/Vietnam/Cambodia focused on equipping marginalized groups with the skills and knowledge to increase their media literacy and effectively recognize and counter disinformation. Partners should budget to train a minimum of 100 individuals with no more than 30 participants per training.
d. Develop pilot activities aimed at countering COVID-related disinformation through media literacy. Activities could include developing short films, working with local journalists, thought leaders and independent media to build media literacy capacity of targeted communities, conducting social media campaigns to spread awareness on the dangers of COVID-19 related disinformation and sharing multi-media resources. These pilot activities will be developed in consultation with IFES and the training participants.
e. Participate in an accessible online platform established by IFES to continue to share knowledge and best practices and resources across the region.
f. Collaborate with IFES to organize a virtual regional dialogue inviting CSOs, government stakeholders, media organizations and journalists in March 2022.
g. Produce a final report covering the selection process, development and implementation of the curriculum, outcomes, lessons learned, challenges and recommendations.

Required Expertise and Experience

The implementing partner must meet the following requirements:

• Be a local non-governmental and non-partisan organization or institution
• Possess in-house institutional expertise in media literacy and/or supporting marginalized groups
• Have experience developing and implementing training curricula, preferably related to media literacy and/or countering disinformation

- Be familiar with international donors' reporting requirements.
- Submit the application in English.

5. **Functional Requirements**

5.1. Timeline:

Applicants must submit a detailed timeline in their Application showing the time required to implement the services requested. IFES requires all deliverables to be completed not later than **April 30, 2022.**

5.2. Monitoring & Evaluation

- As part of its due diligence, IFES conducts pre-award surveys on all potential grantees to assess capacity and inform the appropriate grant mechanism. In addition, applicants expected to expend $750,000 or more in U.S. funded awards during their fiscal year must have an audit conducted in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F—Audit Requirements. If Applicable, applicants must ensure that funds are included in the grant budget for an audit.

- IFES will issue the appropriate grant mechanism depending on the nature of the work, the capacity of the grantee, the duration of the grant, and the overall value of the grant.

- IFES will provide continuous mentorship, training and oversight to ensure grant management practices are in line with anti-corruption principles as well as to build capacity of local grantees to fully manage and implement their programs in adherence to donor regulations and with a view towards sustainability.

5.3. Deliverables:

Specific deliverables and reporting will be determined based on the grant activities proposed and negotiated during the negotiation phase.

6. **Additional Terms & Conditions**

6.1. Non-Disclosure Agreement

IFES reserves the right to require any applicant to enter into a non-disclosure agreement.

6.2. Zero Tolerance for Fraud

IFES has zero tolerance for fraud. Fraud is any act or omission that intentionally misleads, or attempts to mislead, to obtain a benefit or to avoid an obligation. If you have concerns about potential fraud in any way related to IFES projects, contracts, or activities, please contact IFES' Compliance Hotline at compliance@ifes.org or at +1 202-350-6791.

6.3. Intellectual Property

Applicants should not use any intellectual property of IFES including, but not limited to, all logos, registered trademarks, or trade names of IFES, at any time, without the prior written approval of IFES, as appropriate.

6.4. Applications

All accepted applications shall become the property of IFES and will not be returned.

6.5. Governing Law

This RFA and the applicants' applications shall be governed by the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, USA.

6.6. Partial Awarding

IFES reserves the right to accept all or part of the application when awarding the grant. IFES also

reserves the right to issue multiple awards and procure only items or services from selected applicants.

6.7. No Liability

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute a commitment on the part of IFES to make an award nor does it commit IFES to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of any application in response to this RFA. Further, IFES reserves the right to reject any or all applications received or stop solicitation process at any time, without assigning any reason or liability.

IFES shall not be liable to any applicant, person, or entity for any losses, expenses, costs, claims, or damages of any kind:

- Arising out of, by reason of, or attributable to, the applicant responding to this RFA; or
- As a result of the use of any information, error, or omission contained in this RFA document or provided during the RFA process.

6.8. Entire RFA

This RFA, any addenda to it, and any attached schedules, constitute the entire RFA.

6.9. Attachments

Attachment A: Technical Narrative Template
Attachment B: Budget Template
Attachment C: Organizational Capacity and Past Performance Template

End of RFA

ATTACHMENT A
Technical Narrative Template

I.   General Information

Complete Legal Name of Applicant Organization

Office Address

Legal Mailing Address (if different)

Office Telephone Number(s)

E-Mail Address(es)

Director of Organization

_____
Project Manager/Contact Person

_____
Project Dates (month/year – month/year)

_____
Project Title

_____
DUNS Number – If you do not have a DUNS number, please note and leave blank.

_____
PAN Number

II.   Technical Approach:

*Please include the following components in in a maximum of **5 pages***

I.   **Past Experience**

Please provide a short summary of your organization's work with media literacy and/or countering disinformation programs. Please keep your response between 200-300 words.

Please provide a short summary of proposed activities under the "Strengthening Digital Literacy in the Mekong Region." Please keep your response between 200-300 words.

II.   **Project need**

In this section, please describe why this project is important, highlighting the need for the media literacy initiatives for countering COVID-related disinformation. Please also highlight up to two communities who will be the target of your project, this can be persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals, elderly and transient communities . Please keep your response between 300-400 words.

Please outline risk mitigation strategies your organization will take to ensure the safety of staff and participants throughout the program. Please be sure to include the risk to project success, risk level and risk mitigation to be taken.

III.   Goal and Objectives:

Goal: COVID-19 disinformation and hate speech are debunked through better access to information and media literacy among marginalized communities in the Mekong Region (Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand).

- **Objective 1:** Increased collaboration and dialogue among CSOs, the media sector, select state agencies and academics in the region to deliver media literacy programming and advancing countering COVID-19 disinformation efforts.
  Objective 2: Increased understanding of media literacy to effectively counter COVID-19 related disinformation among marginalized groups.

IV.   Activities:

Activity 1: Ongoing Participation in Meetings and Trainings related to Curriculum Development
Over the course of the program, IFES will work with the CSO partner to develop a multi-day online curriculum tailored to the needs and capacity gaps of the Mekong region. CSO partners are required to participate in meetings, trainings and brainstorm sessions with IFES to develop and contextualize the curriculum for their target audiences. Partners are also expected to support the translation of relevant curriculum materials and resources to support the implementation of their online trainings. IFES will also initiate with a Trainer of Trainers (ToT) to support CSO partners in the delivery of the curriculum to its target audience.

Outputs: a) curriculum input b) participation in meetings/training

Activity 2: Facilitate Multi-Day Online Training for Target Audience
After the ToT, IFES will provide technical support to CSO partners in delivering the multi-day training curriculum to its proposed target audience in the Mekong region (Cambodia, Thailand or Vietnam). CSOs should deliver the curriculum to their selected marginalized groups, including women, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals, elderly and transient communities to increase media literacy. Partners will facilitate the training for at minimum 100 individuals and there should be no more than 30 people per training. Partners should budget for any additional resources needed to ensure trainings are accessible such as sign language interpretation, captionists, etc.

In this section, please summarize how your organization will implement the pilot curriculum. Please keep your response between 300-400 words.

Outputs a) training reports; b) training materials c) lessons learned report

Activity 3: Conduct Targeted Countering COVID-19 Disinformation Activities

After the trainings, CSOs will work its target audience to create a countering COVID-19 disinformation pilot activity, which can focus on traditional or social media. Activities could include a short film, media literacy bootcamps or distribution of resources. CSOs are encouraged to collaborate with the government sector and media, if applicable, to conduct these activities. Partners should budget for virtual or in-person activities dependent on the current COVID-19 situation. Budget can include costs such as internet stipends, transporation, venue, per-diem, equipment, personnel and consultant salaries.

In this section, please outline illustrative activities that you would anticipate developing to counter COVID-19 disinformation or expand media literacy following consultation with your training participants. These activities must target the same groups you have trained. Please also include any stakeholders your organization anticipates to collaborate with. Please keep your response between 300-400 words.

Outputs: a) public messaging engagement; b) activity reports

Activity 4: Final Report

Collect, measure, and synthesize outcomes of the earlier activities, to be synthesized in a final report. This report must also take note of any potential changes in disinformation which may have resulted from CSO pilot activities and measure outcomes according to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) indicators.

Outputs: a) final report, including M&E outputs and indicators

III. Implementation Timeline

Please use the following format to provide an implementation timeline

Project Month	Activity	Expected Result	Involved Stakeholders

IV.   Results Framework

Please identify specific results that you expect to realize upon completion of your project and the quantitative and qualitative criteria for the project's success. How will you determine that the project goals have been accomplished? The framework should include:

- A list of results you expect to accomplish throughout the project
- 1-4 performance indicators for each result including a detailed definition for each
- The source, method, frequency and schedule of data collection,
- Staff responsible for collecting data.
- How the performance data will be collected
- How data will be reviewed, analyzed and reported

ATTACHMENT B
Budget Template

CLICK HERE to visit IFES Procurement Notices page and download the budget template

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ATTACHMENT C
Organizational Capacity and Past Performance Template

I.   Summary
Briefly present your organization's mission, its core activities, and why it is best suited for this project

II.   Human Resources
   A.   *Please provide full legal name of organization's Director and / or Chief Executive Officer.*
   B.   *Please provide CVs for the core technical members of the team (the director of the organizationtraining or curriculum experts, project manager etc.).*
   C.   *Please provide hiring plan for full and part-time positions the organization including a list of positions and recruitment plan or cost-share with existing positions.*

III.   Past Performance
   A.   *Briefly describe how your organization's previous experience prepares it to successfully implement the proposed project; highlight the organization's relationship and work experience with lawmakers, political parties or government officials if applicable.*
   B.   *Please list the organization's major projects from the past five years in the following format:*

Project Name	Project Activities	Donor	Award Amount	Period of Award

IV.   References:
   If applicable, contact information for three references from donor funded projects similar in scope.