

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

**Request for Applications (RFA)
Women Empowerment Grants (WEG)**

RFA Number:	RFA 19-06
Issuance Date of RFA:	30 September, 2018
Deadline for Submission of Questions:	04 October, 2018 at 02:00 PM Kabul Time
Posting Date of Answers to Questions:	08 October 2108
Application Submission Deadline Date:	20 October, 2018 at 23:59 Kabul Time
Projected Date of Grant Awards:	On or about 31 December. 2018

On behalf of the USAID-funded Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP), Counterpart International, Inc. (Counterpart) would like to invite you to apply for a Fixed Amount Award (FAA) Grant, as described in this RFA. Registered women-focused and women-led Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) can apply to implement activities that promote women empowerment focusing women's effective political participation and women leadership in Afghanistan. Applicants must demonstrate interest, project experience, professional aptitude, institutional capacity and accomplishments in (1) promoting women rights; (2) improving their quality of life; (3) providing sustainable leadership opportunities; (4) strengthening and encouraging political reform benefitting women and girls; (5) reducing violence against women and girls; and/or (6) encouraging women empowerment and activism. The proposed activities should be targeted with sustainable results and assistance efforts that positively impact lives of women and vulnerable groups through cooperation with local stakeholders such as; Department of Women Affairs (DOWA), EMBs and election related units in provinces, provincial councils and other related public institutions.

Counterpart has decided that the goals and activities in the grant description below meet the criteria for FAA funding. Counterpart International anticipates awarding four (4) Women Empowerment Grants. The goals and activities in the grant description of the applicant must meet the set criteria for FAA funding. The grants will be for duration of six months and a value of up to Afghani One Million and Eight Hundred Thousand (AFS 1,800,000/USD 25,000) to implement the proposed activities around the theme of Women empowerment, women's effective political participation and women leadership in Afghanistan. The anticipated start date of the Fixed Amount Award is on or about Dec 31, 2018.

You are requested to submit one FAA application for implementation of a project that meets the criteria described below. Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions contained in this RFA.

A sample Fixed Amount Award grant is attached for your review and consideration.

A. ACEP 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. (Counterpart), 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.

B. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

ACEP works with civil society organizations (CSOs) to integrate and institutionalize gender in strategic and routine decisions and activities. ACEP's prime implementer Counterpart International and its partners share a development vision in which women and men, girls and boys enjoy economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights and are equally empowered to secure better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities; are equally able to access quality education and health-care; accumulate and control their own economic assets and resources; exercise their own voice, and live free from intimidation, harassment, discrimination, and violence. Under ACEP, Internews supports women working in the media as well as media coverage of issues about and for women and ensures that media development continues to empower women both for their own civic engagement, and for the advancement of the families and communities to which they belong.

ACEP awarded several similar grants in the past to women-led and women-focused CSOs and is working closely with all its partners to ensure gender and youth are properly integrated into programs. ACEP worked and will continue working to enhance women's political participation in the upcoming elections by providing four illustrative women's empowerment grants to women-led and women-focused CSOs. ACEP will also consider capacity-development efforts targeting relevant institutions that are responsible for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 and other related conventions aimed at addressing discrimination against women.

C. GRANT GOAL AND OUTCOMES

The goal of the Women Empowerment Grant is to encourage women-focused and/or women-led CSOs to design, develop and implement activities that enhance women's political participation in the upcoming elections through dialogues, partnerships and civic engagement i.e. voters' education, women's leadership, women's right, women's political participation and access to justice to enable women to defend their rights. Considering capacity-building activities targeting relevant institutions that are responsible for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 and other related conventions aimed at addressing discrimination against women at the community, district and provincial level.

It is anticipated that at least one of the following outcomes will be achieved upon completion of grant activities:

1. Capacity of women-led and women-focused CSOs to participate in each phase of the electoral cycle is increased.
2. Women-led and women-focused CSOs' awareness and understanding of women's rights, obligations and responsibilities regarding their civic rights and especially elections are increased
3. Participation of women in the upcoming elections as voters, candidates and observers is increased.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT GRANT ACTIVITIES

Women-focused and women-led CSOs are expected to submit technical proposals outlining projects, which include at least three (3) activities. These activities should be designed to promote women empowerment focusing women's effective political participation and women leadership in Afghanistan

at community and/or district and/or provincial and/or national level. The description of each activity in the technical proposal must include expected outcomes that are in-line with the grant goal described above under Section C. Applicants should provide comprehensive and detailed descriptions of the activities they are proposing and how they contribute to the expected outcomes of the project. Activities that promote social inclusion by including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups are an essential part of this grant.

The following activities are only examples for illustrative purposes and applicant organizations are encouraged to propose other activities:

Monitoring of the Afghan government's commitment to conventions as well as optional protocols:

The following are examples of the international and national laws, conventions and optional protocols GIRA has signed and ratified to implement in its true spirit. Applicants are expected to come up with activities related to monitoring and advocacy for its implementation in collaboration with Men Supporting Women's Rights (MSWR) group, concerned government offices, media and women-led, women-focused CSOs and other stakeholders.

- The Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- The Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) and
- Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security
- Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW Law)

Policy Dialogue, Partnership and Networking for Women Empowerment and political participation

The following are examples of interventions Activists/Women-led/focused CSOs can engage in, to work on policy dialogues, establish partnership and networking for women empowerment focusing election at district, provincial and national levels:

1. Strengthen effective advocacy through connecting Men Supporting Women's Rights (MSWR) group with advocacy groups working on the provincial level
2. Promote advocacy dialogue between women CSOs, Civil Society Joint Working Group (CSJWG), Civil Society Election Coordination Group (CECG) and the government, including Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in Kabul and in the provinces
3. Develop civic engagement skills, interventions and programs to enable activists/CSOs to be agents of change for positive social and political reforms in their communities focusing women's empowerment.

Women, Democracy, Rights and Peace Process:

The following are examples of interventions women can engage in, to improve access to fundamental rights, promote democratic values and enhance responsiveness of CSOs/activists and communities to emerging issues including peace process and women's effective political participation in Afghanistan

1. Outreach initiatives to promote women's political participation, empowerment and role in peace process through positive opinion makers
2. Participation of women in provincial council meetings, peace council meetings, and district level shuras, and/or shuras and jirgas at the community level.
3. Initiate small community level project aiming at to promote gender equality, civic engagement for women empowerment, women's rights, strengthening and encouraging political reform benefitting women, reducing violence against women and girls, openness, diversity, peace,

- stability through debates, competitions, exhibitions, cultural and other locally accepted events
4. Activities that strengthen women and youth's roles in electoral processes such as supporting women and vulnerable groups in all processes of election, increasing the number of women in the election system, and increasing women participation, both as nominees and voters.

C. FUNDING AND OTHER LIMITATIONS

C.1. Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs)

Four (4) Fixed Amount Award Grants shall be issued. Each FAA grant shall be for up to six (6) months period of time (Dec 31, 2018 – June 30, 2019) and cannot exceed Afghani One Million and Eight Hundred Thousand 1,800,000.

Payments shall be issued based on the successful achievement of the deliverables identified for each activity.

Please note the following points regarding ACEP's issuance of FAAs, according to USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS 303.3.25):

- FAAs are intended to support very specific program elements; there is no requirement for ACEP to monitor the actual costs subsequently incurred. No financial reporting shall be required under a Fixed Amount Award Grant.
- This type of award reduces some of the administrative burden and record-keeping requirements. Accountability is primarily based on performance and results.
- FAAs are used to support specific projects, where there is a certainty about cost, and where the accomplishment of the purpose or outcomes(s) in the grant is readily discernible and feasible.
- Grantees are paid a set, fixed amount (determined by the final value of the approved budget) upon the accomplishment of the approved deliverables.
- There is limited risk that the grant activity will change.
- International airfares and indirect costs are not eligible for ACEP financing.

C.2. Preventing Terrorist Financing

Individuals and organizations are reminded that they must not engage in transactions with, or provide resources or support to, individuals and organizations associated with terrorism, including those individuals or entities that appear on the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List maintained by the U.S. Treasury (online at: <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/SDN-List/Pages/default.aspx>), or the United Nations Security designation list (online at: http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/aq_sanctions_list.shtml).

C.3 Prohibition to Fund Banned Activities

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](#)).

C.4 Other Limitations

To avoid duplication of funding, applicants that have active grants/programs and/or planning to receive grants/programs of similar nature from USAID or other donors will not be considered for this opportunity at this time. By submitting a proposal in response to this RFA, the applicant certifies that it

does not have an active grant of a similar nature from USAID or other donors.

D. INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS

FAA applications shall consist of a Technical Proposal and a Cost Proposal (Budget and Narrative), as described below. An application containing all of the required information in the following Application Requirements shall be considered a complete application.

D.1 Application Requirements

A. Applications must be in English. Proposals should be limited to ten (10) pages, submitted in Times Roman 12.

B. Technical Proposal (Using Attachment A1, Grant Activity Proposal)

A Technical Proposal shall be submitted per the Program Description above using the Attachment A1 format to include the following information:

1. Proposal Cover Sheet: Name and Contact information (Address, telephone number, E-mail address).
2. Summary of the Problem, Need, Grant Activities
3. Project Description – Need Analysis, Objective, Activities Analysis & Understanding. This section presents the CSO's analysis and understanding of the stated program purpose and description of the project proposed activities and their relevance.
4. Implementation Plan – This section presents a task plan for addressing the requirements shown in the Program Description.
5. Integration of Gender, Disabled and Youth – Grantee shall demonstrate in the implementation plan how gender, disabled, and Youth as a cross cutting activities will be integrated in all the activities.
6. CSO experience implementing women and youth empowerment projects, if applicable. List projects, total project budgets, funders, duration and objectives of the projects. This can be in a separate sheet and not part of the ten-page proposal.

C. Budget and Budget Narrative (Using Attachments B1, Budget and B2, Budget Narrative):

1. Using Attachment B1, please develop a Budget with a proposed start date of April 01, 2016, in an amount not to exceed AFN 1,600,000. 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 proposed 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.

D.2 Questions and Answers

Questions regarding the RFA or the procurement process must be submitted in writing to applications.acep@counterpart.org with subject line: **“Question RFA 18-05 Women Empowerment Grants by no later than 04 October , 2018 02:00 PM (Kabul time).”**

All Questions collected & Answers (Q&A) will be posted on the ACEP website and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Counterpart.Afghanistan> **on 08 Oct, 2018.**

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

D.3 Deadline Date for Responding to this RFA

Complete Applications must be emailed to applications.acep@counterpart.org. The email and attachment(s) 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 18-05 Women Empowerment Grants.**

The deadline for submitting Complete Applications is 20 October, 2018, 23:59 PM Kabul Time.

Late or incomplete applications 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.

D.4 Application Evaluation and Selection Criteria

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 will thoroughly review and evaluate the applications in accordance with application evaluation procedures. As proposals are limited to ten (10) pages as stated above, only the first ten (10) pages after the cover page will be read by the GTEC members.

Applications will be reviewed based on the following evaluation criteria:



Application Technical Aspects for Selection	Scoring
1. Relevance of the proposed project to the key purpose of the Women Empowerment Grants. (Does the proposed project adequately address the problem statement?)	10
2. Organization’s ability to successfully implement the project. Relevant previous experience including list of grants obtained in the last three years. Experience of key CSO personnel.	25
3. Relevance and suitability of planned activities and expected result to achieve project objectives related to the thematic areas described in the RFA.	25
4. Results are Project sustainability potential and impact on target communities/beneficiaries – community contribution Monitoring plan. Understanding of how change takes place.	10
5. Project activities demonstrated Gender and Youth mainstreaming. Involvement in project design and mechanisms for assuring women and youth are heard and considered.	10
6. Budget reasonableness and cost effectiveness.	15
7. Replicability, innovation and/or potential to have significant impact.	5
Maximum Score	100

Using the above evaluation criteria, GTEC members will score and rank each application and recommend the top four (4) applications for funding.

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

E. AWARDING OF FIXED AMOUNT AWARD GRANTS

Up to four (4) Fixed Amount Award types of grants will be issued for the Women Empowerment Grants. The total value of the Fixed Amount Award grant will be equal to the value of the final approved FAA budget. The grantee will be paid based on achievement of the deliverables as outlined in the FAA and not on actual costs incurred. The focus will be on performance and results and not on cost. Payment will be based on successful completion and reporting of the established deliverables outlined in the FAA.

A sample Fixed Amount Award Grant template is included as part of this RFA package.

E.1 Post-Award Orientation Meeting

After the award of the fixed amount award, ACEP shall conduct a post-award orientation meeting with the Grantees. The meeting may be held in person or by phone. The post-award orientation meeting is an essential tool to help ACEP and the recipient achieve a clear and mutual understanding of the fixed amount award’s requirements. The meeting helps the Grantee understand the roles and responsibilities of ACEP who is administering the grant and reduces performance risks and future problems. It is an opportunity to review, discuss and clarify key aspects of the grant and its administration, help the Grantee meet the intended goals and outputs of the grant and contribute to building the Grantee’s

capacity. In addition, it should identify those areas where the Grantee may need additional help in meeting the grant's conditions. Items to be discussed at the meeting may include, but not be limited to, the authority of ACEP personnel who administer the grant, the specific terms and conditions of the grant, ACEP's monitoring and evaluation plans, milestones, requests for payment, voucher approval, and payment procedures.

E.2 Monitoring and Site Visits

Because monitoring of the grant activities is based on fixed-cost deliverables, and is not tied to incurred costs, it is important that appropriate monitoring and oversight of the grantee and the activities are conducted. As part of the technical oversight, site visits by Counterpart staff may be conducted to ensure that satisfactory progress is being made and the milestones are being met.

E.3 Payment

All requests for payment must correspond to a deliverable specified in the fixed amount award. Invoices (also referred to as Vouchers) must list the deliverable, not costs, as the product, task, deliverable or objective for which payment is being made. ACEP shall independently verify and document that the deliverable has been completed; however, it may choose to rely on verification by a third party verifier. Only ACEP may give administrative approval of recipient vouchers.

Since fixed amount award payments are for fixed-amount deliverables, ACEP will not verify that the grantee incurred the costs as estimated in making the award. Any actual differences between the estimated costs used to set the payments and the grantee's actual incurred costs cannot be used to adjust the agreed upon amount for the milestone or the FAA. The documentation required for payment, per the Deliverable Schedule in the FAA, relates to proof that the deliverable was completed. Because payment follows verification of deliverable completion, the timing of verification shall be planned and conducted in a manner so that payment is received as soon as possible.

F. DISCLAIMERS

Please note that the issuance of this Request for Application does not constitute an award or 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 is the sole responsibility of the applicant.

Counterpart International reserves the right to reject any or all applications received.

G. RFA ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A1: ACEP Grant Activity Proposal Template
- Attachment B1: ACEP Budget Template
- Attachment B2: ACEP Budget Narrative Template
- Sample Fixed Amount Award