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STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA SYSTEMS (SAWT) ACTIVITY

Request for Applications (RFA)

May 12, 2024

DIGITAL FIRST CYCLE 2 IMPLEMENTER RFA

SAWT RFA: GRANT # 01/2024

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Due date for applications: Thursday June 13, 2024 @ 17:00 Amman Time
- Questions must be submitted by: Thursday May 30, 2024 @ 17:00 Amman Time.

Questions and Applications must be submitted to jo-sawt-grants@internews.org

The content of this Request for Application (RFA) is the responsibility of Internews and does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the Government of the United States.

Strengthening Civil Society and Media Systems (Sawt) Activity

Digital First Program Cycle 2 Implementation

Request for Applications (RFA)

About Sawt Activity

The Strengthening Civil Society and Media Systems (Sawt) Activity is a five-year (2022-2027) cooperative agreement funded by USAID and implemented by Internews in partnership with Mercy Corps and the International Center for Non-Profit Law (ICNL). Sawt aims to foster sustained civic engagement in Jordan through civil society and digital media innovations seeking two main Objectives: **1) Good, Trusted Knowledge-Building Resources**: Citizens and civil society build knowledge through accessing and engaging critically with accurate and fact-based information and **2) Participation & Advocacy:** Citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) in Jordan effectively participate in civic spaces and advocate for policies through knowledge-based collective action.

About Internews

Internews is an international nonprofit operating in 100 countries. At Internews, we believe everyone deserves trustworthy news and information to make informed decisions about their lives and hold power to account. We train journalists and digital rights activists, tackle disinformation, and offer business expertise to help media outlets become financially sustainable. For more information about the organization please visit: www.internews.org.

Announcement Date: *May 12, 2024*

Summary Data

Funder (Prime Funder): Internews

Announcement Type: Request for Applications (RFA) – Competitive

RFA Number: Grants 01/2024

CFDA Number: 98.001

Application Submission Deadline: ***Thursday June 13, 2024 @ 17:00 Amman time***

About Digital First Cycle 2 Implementer Grant

Sawt seeks to initiate a training and capacity-building program that targets public interest independent Jordanian digital media and information platforms, in collaboration with a dynamic media training organization (Digital First). Through Internews resources and curriculum operationalization, the Digital First Program is designed to empower targeted Jordanian media platforms in crucial areas related to journalistic and editorial skills, subject-matter expertise, and technological proficiency. Through personalized mentoring and collaborative content production support and facilitation, the Program aims to bolster the capacity, development, and sustainability of these platforms to empower them to have a positive contribution towards a healthier information ecosystem in Jordan, a necessary driver for active civic participation.

The program entails two phases. During the first phase, which is envisioned to last 6-8 months, the focus is on theoretical and practical training for representatives from 8-10 media platforms. Leveraging Internews resources, the offered trainings should address key areas including content quality improvement, audience engagement strategies, and digital publishing. Moreover, trainings will also be

delivered to enhance institutional capacities related to technology, governance, and media management to increase long-term sustainability.

The role of the solicited implementer is related to the first phase, which is focused on capacity building trainings.

Digital First Program Cycle 2 Implementer

The solicited implementer will play a pivotal role in the first phase of the program, spanning 6-8 months. During this phase, the implementer's focus will be on providing theoretical and practical trainings for 1-3 often rotating representatives from 8-10 targeted media platforms. Leveraging Internews resources and curriculum[1], the training will encompass crucial areas, including content quality improvement, audience engagement strategies, and digital publishing and dissemination. Furthermore, the implementer will work towards enhancing institutional capacities related to technology, governance, and media management. This phase is strategically designed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the participating media platforms.

Digital First Cycle 2 Program Objectives

1. **Capacity Enhancement:** Strengthen the digital capacities of selected media platforms through theoretical and practical training.

2. **Content Quality Improvement:** Enhance the quality of content produced by media platforms, focusing on journalistic standards, audience engagement, and effective digital dissemination.

3. **Institutional Empowerment:** Improve institutional capacities related to technology, governance, business planning, and media management, fostering long-term sustainability.

4. **Strategic Focus:** Enhance the abilities of trained media platforms to address information needs of local communities, ensuring that media platforms play a positive role in fostering a healthier information ecosystem in Jordan.

5. **Grant Facilitation:** Enhance trained media platforms abilities to benefit from grants offered to advance their organizational and content production capabilities, supporting sustainability and professional content generation.

Program Beneficiaries

The Digital First cycle 2 Program's beneficiaries will be selected based on a set of criteria:
1. Must be registered, operational and compliant with Jordan's media registration and operational requirements.
2. Should be financially independent.
3. Must have a digital publishing platform (website, app, or active social media accounts) and demonstrate active content publication over the past year.
4. Show a commitment to public interest journalism.
5. Platform's produced media coverage should be directed towards audiences in Jordan.
6. Did not enroll in the program's first cycle.

Sawt will encourage applications from independent and community-based media platforms focusing on youth, women, persons with disabilities, climate and environmental issues, civic and economic participation, public services, media literacy, and fact-checking. To view the call for participation, browse this link.

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[1] To receive Internews' localized media sustainability guide send an email request to: jo-media@internews.org

Scope of Work

The Digital First Cycle 2 program aims to enhance the capacity of trained partner media platforms in Jordan through comprehensive training, mentorship, and collaborative content production. The scope of work encompasses the following key components:

1. **Training Plan Development:**

    - Develop a training plan based on a needs assessment and the OCA[2] baseline.

    - Ensure the training plan addresses the specific needs identified, providing a roadmap for skill development and capacity building of beneficiaries.

2. **Training Sessions:**

    - Deliver well-structured training sessions covering priority topics for media platforms. The following list describes training topics identified by Sawt to be covered in the first phase of the program through a schedule of trainings, speakers, and workshops, leading to content creation reflecting gained knowledge and skills.

Digital Publishing	Content Formats and Thematic Focus Areas	Organizational and Operations
Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for content production and dissemination	Multimedia digital content production and podcasts	Media Law and Ethics
Search Engine Optimization	In-depth and investigative journalism	Media Regulation and Regulatory Framework
Publishing journalistic content on social media platforms	Science and Health Journalism, Climate and Environment Journalism	Financial Management for Media Organizations
Digital safety and cyber security essentials	Solutions and Data Journalism	Developing Strategies and Business Models and Plans for Media Organizations
	Media and Information Literacy, and Factchecking	
	Human Rights Based Journalism	
	Community listening approaches to integrate community-perspectives into produced content (Internews Listening Post)[3]	
	Media and advocacy (ethics and partnerships)	

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[2] The OCA is a media assessment tool developed and adapted by Internews to provide quantifiable data about media partners' level of organizational health, business and editorial planning and capabilities, and security and information technology preparedness, among other criteria. It will be conducted by an external evaluator.

[3] The Listening Post is an Internews approach to produce media content based on community listening: Home - Listening Post Collective

- While the above topics have been identified as priorities, Sawt is open to additional topics that can increase media organizations editorial, organizational, and technological capacities and advance its role in providing a healthy information system.

- Ensure that beneficiaries are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective content creation, digital dissemination, and audience engagement.

- Encourage and facilitate individual or group content creation to maintain an active level of content production, deploying skills and capacities acquired through the trainings.

3. **Mentorship Support:**

- Offer personalized mentorship to each media platform, allocating up to 16 hours per media platform to guide partners in prioritizing their organizational goals and needs and address pressing priorities benefiting from provided trainings.

4. **Listening Post (LP) Training:**

- Utilizing Internews available resources and Sawt-led localized resources, train beneficiaries on the Internews LP approach, focusing on identifying underserved community information needs through community listening tools, collaborative content production and dissemination, as well as continuous audience engagement.

- Encourage and facilitate individual or group content creation based on Internews approach.

Deliverables

Milestone	Description	Deliverables
1	Training Plan	Updated and revised training plan built on the approach explained in the proposal, reflecting training needs, training mode (in person and remote) trainees' scheduling preference.
2	Training Sessions	Detailed Training Topics, Trainers Resumes, and Training Hours Allocation
3	Mentorship Sessions	Mentorship Progress Reports (**up to** 192 hours total)
4	Listening Post (LP) Training	Listening Post (LP) Training Completion Report and plan to support collaborative community listening and content production and dissemination
5	Reporting	Monthly progress reports, final program impact report, and success stories
6	Documentation	All supporting documents for all conducted trainings, events, activities, and meetings

Application Instructions

Applicants are required to submit a proposal addressing all training themes and topics identified above, elaborating their unique approach to design and implementation in line with identified goals for the program. While the topics have been identified as priorities, Sawt is open to additional topics that can increase media organizations editorial, organizational, and technological capacities and advance its role in providing a healthy information system. Moreover, proposals should include training approach, trainers resume, number of training hours allocated to each topic, and the skills and knowledge to be gained or enhanced out of each training.

Award Information

Sawt anticipates awarding one subawards to successful applicant whose proposals best fulfil the program objectives and meet the selection criteria, and with performance periods from **six (6) to eight (8) months**.

Eligibility Information

Applicants must meet the following criteria to be considered eligible for a subaward resulting from this RFA:

- Must be legally registered in Jordan.

- Must submit a complete application package using the attached Annexes and instructions.

- Not listed with active exclusions on the UN Security Designation List, Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Person List, System for Award Management (SAM), or Internews List of Debarred Grant recipients.

All applications will go through an initial screening against the eligibility criteria. Applicants who do not meet the requirements will be eliminated.

Publication Rights

Organizations who receive a subaward under this RFA are free to copyright any stories, publications, or other copyrightable materials developed in the course of or under this award, but Internews and USAID reserve a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use, and to authorize others to use the work for non-commercial purposes.

Branding Requirements

Activities under this contract are pre-emptively exempted from marking — per the Sawt branding and marking plan — so if the implementer or any of the program beneficiaries wishes to include the identity/ logo of Sawt implementing partners in their external communications, they must discuss it first with Internews. If Internews gives approval for branding and marking, then the subrecipient will be trained by Internews communications staff on branding and marking policies and compliance.

Ethics, Risk and Documentation

The implementer will uphold Do No Harm principles throughout the Digital First program. Ensuring respect for the editorial integrity of media platforms and their capacity to choose their level of engagement in the program is vital. Sawt emphasizes the importance of ethical considerations in alignment with local and cultural sensitivities.

All program-related documents are treated as highly sensitive and confidential. Unauthorized sharing of any program-related documents or information is strictly prohibited without written authorization from Sawt.

Documentation plays a crucial role in ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the program. This includes the proper documentation of consent processes, whether through forms or oral consent. Clear communication about the program and its objectives will precede the implementation. Sawt maintains a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism and expects all quotes, quantitative findings, or media content resulting from the training to be traceable through proper documentation and based on sound editorial practices.

Submission Instructions

Interested organizations are invited to submit a Full Application Package that consists of Program Description (proposal that includes a training program design, timeline, and deliverables) (Annex I), Detailed Budget (Annex II), along with Registration Certificate, addressed to: jo-sawt-grants@internews.org **by Thursday June 13, 2024 17:00 Amman time** making sure to write "Digital First Cycle 2 Implementor, Sawt Activity" in the subject of your e-mail. Successful respondents will be notified of selection; however, notice of selection is not to be construed as a confirmation of granting a subaward, which is contingent on funder approval.

The Full Application Package must be submitted in font Gill Sans MT, font size (11), and must include page numbers. Each page must be marked with the title and number.

Required Documents:

Please submit the following attachments with your proposal package:

- Program Description (Annex I)
- Detailed Budget (Annex II)
- Copy of organization's certificate of registration
- The organization's relevant training portfolio.
- Additional support documents outlining training approach, including training plans, trainers' resumes, previous relevant examples of training experiences.

Evaluation Criteria

Selected subrecipients will be chosen based on the following criteria:

Grant Application Evaluation Criteria	Max Points
Relevant training and capacity building experience: The proposal should showcase relevant recent examples of implementing similar training and capacity building programs, in terms of topics, target group, and intended impact.	25
Approach: The proposal, technical and financial, should describe how the applicant intends to structure and implement the trainings in a way that is engaging, flexible, cost effective, and ensures transfer of knowledge to target group.	25
Trainers, speakers, and mentors: The proposal should provide a list of capable and experienced trainers, speakers and mentors who will be delivering the trainings. Proposal should highlight their professional strengths and expertise and the desired impact on training and trainees.	25
Localization and collaboration: The proposal should include a clear description regarding the resources the training will be based on including localized Internews resources resulting from the implementation of the first cycle of digital first, namely Internews' Media Sustainability Guide[4] and Listening Post Playbook[5]. The description should also include how the applicant intends to encourage collaborative content development and dissemination among trainees.	25
Total	100

Additional Considerations

Gender, Equality, and Social Inclusion (GESI):

Sawt places a high priority on integrating GESI considerations across all interventions. This ensures that women, youth, and people with disabilities (PWDs) are acknowledged as significant stakeholders in all interventions and are empowered to actively participate in all activities. Applicants are required to outline their plans for integrating and including marginalized populations – especially women, youth, and PWDs – or at the very least, mitigating any adverse effects on these groups in Annex I: Program Description.

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[4] The Media Sustainability Guide was developed to help media managers identify and choose the most relevant business models and practices that fit with their missions and operating conditions. It provides a common language around core concepts of media business functions and provides leads to further resources. It offers practical, straightforward guidance on growing audiences and diversifying revenue sources. Internews Media Sustainability Guide can be accessed here, a localized version can be emailed upon request.

[5] The Listening Post (LP) approach started off as an Internews project initiated to serve community information needs in areas suffering from natural disasters and disrupted information flows, where civic media initiatives are needed to bridge information supply and demand through relevant easy to reach and digest content. The LP is dedicated to identifying, creating, and supporting community spaces (digital and offline) for vital information and news sharing. The LP approach can be deployed to encourage the emergence of civic media where they are missing or support their output where they are already working. Sawt has produced resources localizing the LP approach to the Jordanian context. Implementation of trainings will be mostly based on these resources. Internews Listening Post resources can be accessed here, a localized version can be emailed upon request.

GESI is an essential component to consider when including in a grant proposal to ensure that project activities are designed and implemented in a way that promotes gender equality and social inclusion and addresses the needs and concerns of marginalized groups. This should be considered while working on needs assessment, setting the objectives and outcomes, developing and implementing the activities and strategies, monitoring and evaluation, budgeting, and allocating resources.

Environmental Considerations:

When applicable, selected applicants will not receive awards until their proposals are screened by the prime funder to assure activities will result in no adverse environmental impact, to develop mitigation measures, as necessary, and to specify environmental monitoring and reporting.

UEI Number:

The Federal Government has transitioned from the use of the DUNS Number to the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) as the primary means of entity identification for Federal awards government-wide. UEI numbers are required in accordance with 2 CFR Part 25, and the transition from DUNS to UEI has resulted in the UEI being issued by the Federal Government in SAM.gov. Before receiving any grant of USD $25,000 or more, applicants must obtain a UEI number. *Sawt requires applicants to register and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). A UEI number is a must before receiving a grant. As obtaining a UEI number may require significant time Sawt recommends submitting request as soon as possible to avoid potential delays.*

Indirect Costs:

Selected subrecipients will be eligible for reimbursement of indirect costs if they:

1. Have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from their cognizant agency, or

2. Accept a de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% applied to Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). MTDC is defined as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, employee, and consultant travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward or subcontract (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards or subcontracts under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs[6] and the portion of each subaward or subcontract more than $25,000.

Cost Principles:

Proposal budgets will be reviewed in accordance with, and selected subrecipients' costs will be subject to, the cost principles that apply to them to assure reasonableness, allocability, and allowability:

1. Not for Profit organizations:

    a. 2CFR200 Subpart E, Cost Principles

2. For Profit organizations:

    a. 48CFR31.2 Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) and 48CFR731.2

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[6] Participant support costs are direct costs for items such as stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with conferences, or training projects.

b. [Acquisition Regulation (AIDAR) - A Mandatory Reference to ADS 300 Series Acquisition Chapters](#) - Cost Principles for Commercial Organizations

All costs must be reasonable, allocable, and allowable. Reasonable costs are those costs that are generally recognized as ordinary and necessary and would be incurred by a prudent person in the conduct of normal business. Allocable costs are those costs specifically linked to the execution of the activity such as staff salaries, consultations, transportation, stationery and supplies, and other direct costs. Allowable costs are those costs that conform to any limitations in the grant award.

This grant program will **NOT** fund the following costs:

- Pre-award Cost (cost incurred prior to signing the agreement).
- Value Added Tax (VAT), General Sales Tax (GST) in Jordan, Customs and Duties and other taxes.
- Profit margin.
- Second-tier grants.
- Ceremonies, parties, celebrations, or "representation" expenses.
- Purchases of restricted goods, such as: restricted agricultural commodities, motor vehicles including motorcycles, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, contraceptive products, used equipment; without the previous approval of Sawt, or prohibited goods under USAID regulations, including but not limited to the following: abortion equipment and services, luxury goods, etc.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Construction.
- Purchases of goods or services restricted or prohibited under the prevailing USAID source/nationality.
- Any purchase or activity, which has already been covered by other donors or projects.
- Prior obligations of and/or, debts, fines, and penalties imposed on the Grantee.

Subaward Administration:

Internews is required to respect the provisions of the United States Foreign Assistance Act and other United States laws and regulations. The Grant Program will be administered according to Internews' policies and procedures as well as 's regulations for non-U.S. non-governmental grantees which are laid out in the Automated Directives System (ADS) Standard Provisions for Non-U.S., Non-governmental Grantees, found here (https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab). Before awarding, grant recipients will be required to review, complete and sign to confirm their compliance with the ADS certifications (https://www.usaid.gov/about-us/agency-policy/series-300/references-chapter/303mav)

The following regulations and provisions, at minimum, will apply to grant agreements issued as a result of this RFA:

- For US organizations:

    • 2CFR200 and 2CFR700 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards

    • ADS303maa Standard Provisions for US Non-governmental Organizations

- For Non-US organizations:

    • ADS303mab Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations

Internews and USAID Prior Approval:

The selected applicants will be subject to Internews and USAID approval before a grant is awarded. Therefore, organizations are reminded that there may be delays in the completion of this process. Should such approval not be given, the grant cannot be awarded. Sawt has the right to hold pre-selection meetings and to request additional documents.

Disclaimer:

The issuance of this RFA does not commit Internews to make an award to any prospective grantee responding to this solicitation. Prospective sub grantees will not be reimbursed for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. Internews reserves the right to reject any and/or all applications or make an award without further discussion or negotiations.

Inquiries:

All questions regarding this RFA should be directed via email to jo-sawt-grants@internews.org no later than ***Thursday May 30, 2024 @ 17:00 Amman* Time.**

[End of RFA]