

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA SYSTEMS (SAWT) ACTIVITY

Request for Applications (RFA)

September 5, 2024

MARKETPLACE RFA

SAWT RFA: GRANT # 02/2024

Due date for applications: Sunday October 6, 2024 @ 17:00 Amman Time

Questions must be submitted to the following email jo-sawt-grants@internews.org by Thursday September 19, 2024 @ 17:00 Amman Time

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

Sawt Marketplace RFA 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: September 5, 2024

Summary Data

Funder (Prime Funder): Internews

Announcement Type: Request for Applications (RFA)

RFA Number: Grants 02/2024

CFDA Number: 98.001

Application Submission Deadline: **Sunday October 6, 2024 @ 17:00 Amman time**

About Sawt Marketplace

Sawt is seeking to create the Sawt Marketplace, a sustainable online platform that aims to provide access to CSOs in Jordan to comprehensive and constant capacity-building services, collaboration opportunities, knowledge-sharing, and data that will support their organizational strengthening. Specifically, the Marketplace will:

- **Facilitate Services:** The Marketplace serves as a matchmaker service where CSOs can find trusted service providers - such as consultants, legal advisors, or technology vendors - to support their initiatives, capacities and operations.,

- **Capacity Strengthening:** The primary function of the Marketplace is enhancing the capacity of CSOs by offering a diverse range of online training modules and toolkits produced by Sawt such as community engagement, interest-based negotiation, media and information literacy, and advocacy resources. Additionally, it provides downloadable educational toolkits and templates.
- **Foster Networking:** The Marketplace encourages networking and collaboration, facilitating knowledge exchange, and creating a unified and supportive CSO community by sharing best practices and exploring potential collaboration opportunities utilizing chat boxes and Q&A posts.
- **Resource Provision:** The Marketplace provides a robust repository of resources and opportunities, including reports, case studies, and training materials. Users can easily search for, and access relevant resources to support their organizational development and project implementation efforts. The platform should enable filtration such as: date, type of material, topic, country of origin, and category. This content will be public and accessible to content providers and recipients (CSOs). It is important to note that Sawt will provide the content - including the documents, materials, and modules; so, it is not the responsibility of the grantee to create these.
- **Facilitate Opportunities:** The Marketplace actively seeks and showcases opportunities that amplify the impact of CSOs through providing updates and announcing calls for proposals, partnership opportunities, and funding competitions tailored to the needs and interests of CSOs. The Marketplace also highlights success stories and impact reports to connect them with potential donors or collaborators.

The selected grantee will be responsible for ensuring that all activities outlined above are delivered according to the standards Sawt requires. The selected grantee will design, develop, own and manage the marketplace, including the upload of training resources from Sawt to the Marketplace, ensuring consistent quality, and look and feel of the resources. As mentioned above, this content will be public and accessible to content providers (such as NGOs, donors, universities, etc.) and service recipients (CSOs) via the platform. Additionally, the selected grantee will be expected to create an online recorded orientation (self-paced) session whereby both recipients and content providers can access at any point and learn how to navigate the Marketplace. This orientation should cover but will not be limited to: Marketplace functionalities, quality assurance measures, technical support services, available resources, and usage guidelines.

The grantee should also propose aspects of technical design for the Marketplace, thus creating a robust, secure, and user-friendly platform that meets the needs of both resource providers and service recipients. Additionally, the design should prioritize sustainability, ensuring long-term usability, scalability, and adaptability to evolving needs, thus supporting continuous growth and impact for the CSO community.

Furthermore, the applicant must clearly articulate in the Program Description (Annex I), their strategy for leveraging their current platform to develop the USAID Sawt Marketplace into a finalized product. Specifically, the description should address how effectively the applicant can utilize their existing resources, technology, and expertise to achieve the project goals.

Award Information

Sawt anticipates awarding One (1) subaward to a successful applicant that meets the eligibility and selection criteria specified below and has experience in developing and managing functional and interactive online platforms that aligns with the objectives of the Marketplace objectives described below.

Submission Instructions

Interested organizations are invited to submit a full Application Package that consists of a Program Description (Annex I), a Detailed Budget (Annex 2), and a Registration Certificate, addressed to: jo-sawt-grants@internews.org by **Sunday October 6, 2024, 17:00 Amman time**, making sure to include “Marketplace RFA - Sawt Activity” in the subject line of the e-mail. Successful applicants will be notified of being short-listed. However, this notice should not be construed as a confirmation of granting a subaward, as this is contingent on funding approval.

Shortlisted applicants who pass the eligibility criteria and score 65 or above will be required to present their platform, with their technical team in attendance (key personnel you list in the **Program Description** document). Please refer to the “**Evaluation Criteria**” section below.

The Full Application Package must be submitted in font Gill Sans MT, font size (11), and with 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

Eligibility Information

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

- Must have an established and functioning online networking platform.
- 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. Applications that do not meet the requirements will be eliminated.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth below. Awards will be granted to applicants that offer the best technical and financial value to Sawt. Applicants should note that these criteria: (1) serve as the standard against which all applications will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that potential sub-grantees should address in their applications.

#	Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Points
1	Relevance to Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well does the applicant’s proposed platform align with the objectives of the Marketplace RFA. (10) 	20 Points

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effectively does the applicant articulate their strategy for leveraging their current platform to develop the Sawt Marketplace into a finalized product. (10) 	
2	Experience and Track Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant's experience in managing and operating online networking and capacity-building platforms. (10) The applicant's previous years of experience in implementing similar projects or initiatives. (5) 	15 Points
3	Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the application shows a clear and applicable sustainability strategy (5) Proposed staff expertise, financial stability of the Marketplace platform, and the ability to scale operations. (10) 	15 Points
4	Capacity and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant possesses organizational capacity and resources to effectively implement the proposed activities. (10) 	10 Points
5	Innovation and Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of innovation and creativity demonstrated in the applicant's approach to Marketplace in terms of design, management, and implementation, in addition to what level it remains user-friendly. (15) 	15 Points
6	Budget and Cost Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget proposed by the applicant, ensuring it is realistic, well-justified, and cost-effective. (10) Value for money in relation to the proposed activities and outcomes. (10) 	20 Points
7	Data Protection, Digital Safety and Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effectively does the applicant ensure data protection, digital safety, and privacy in their platform. (3) How well does the applicant maintain a bug-free environment in their platform, ensuring reliability and a smooth user experience (2) 	5 Points
		Total	100 Points

Shortlisted applicants who pass the eligibility criteria and score 65 or above will be invited to do a presentation of their platform for the evaluation committee. The presentation will be evaluated based on:

- Clarity and Articulation of Strategy: How clearly does the applicant articulate their strategy for leveraging their current platform to develop the Sawt Marketplace (2 points).
- Technical Feasibility: How realistic and feasible is the technical implementation plan presented (2 points).
- User Experience and Interface Design: How user-friendly and well-designed is the platform interface (2 points).
- Scalability and Sustainability: How scalable and sustainable is the proposed platform (2 points).
- Relevance to the Sawt activity: How the platform will help achieve Sawt objectives (2 points).

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 women, youth, and vulnerable individuals or at the very least, mitigating any adverse effects on these groups in Annex I: Program Description.

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, the selected applicant will not receive awards until their proposals are screened by the prime funder to ensure activities will result in no adverse environmental impact, to develop mitigation measures, as necessary, and to specify the 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 a 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 costs¹ and the portion of each subaward or subcontract of more than \$25,000.

¹ 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.

Cost Principles:

Proposal budgets will be reviewed in accordance with, and the subsequent 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](#)
 - b. [USAID 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:

- Second-tier grants.
- 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.
- Ceremonies, parties, celebrations, or “representation” expenses.
- Purchases of restricted goods -such as: restricted agricultural commodities, motor vehicles including motorcycles, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, contraceptive products, and 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 USAID'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, September 19, 2024 @ 17:00 Amman Time.**

[End of RFA]