

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY INNOVATION FUND

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU / EMBASSY
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Funding Opportunity Title: *Fiscal Transparency Innovation Fund (FTIF)*

Funding Opportunity Number: *NG-FTIF-2022*

Deadline for Applications: *June 30, 2022*

Assistance Listing Number: *19.662*

Total Amount Available: *\$210,000*

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Embassy Niamey / Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs of the U.S. Department of State announces an open competition for organizations to submit applications to carry out a program for *Expanding Influence and Access of Investigative Journalism in Niger to Counter Financial Corruption and Promote Fiscal Transparency*. Please follow all instructions below.

Priority Region: All regions of Niger

Background:

In 2021, Niger scored 31 on the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, ranking 124 out of 180 countries, and according to the World Bank, Niger's performance in terms of transparency and accountability is low. Even though Niger's Cour des Comptes – the national board of auditors and the highest jurisdiction for auditing public finances- does release the results of its national budget audit, pointing out significantly questionable spending, little media attention is drawn to these matters. Print, television, and online media rarely investigate cases of corruption, and normally report only information released by the government. The fight against corruption is an ongoing battle that requires the contribution of all actors, among whom the media is prominent. This year, the Fiscal Transparency Innovation Fund (FTIF) will support programs that aim to create a self-sustaining journalistic ecosystem which can investigate and report on corruption independent of official government statements and create evidentiary reporting that the government must respond to.

Niger's only journalism academy, the Technical Training Institute for Information and Communication (IFTIC in French), does not have a concentration in investigative journalism. The lack of properly trained and motivated investigative journalists in Niger offers buoyancy to this system of impunity as it lessens public pressure to hold the government accountable to investigate and prosecute corruption. If the pool of properly trained investigative journalists expanded and included regular reporting on fiscal malfeasance, then the government would be forced to investigate and prosecute corrupt actors because of greater public knowledge of corrupt acts revealed through the media more readily.

Goal: Decrease the level of corruption, fiscal malfeasance, and budget irregularities in Niger

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY INNOVATION FUND

Project Objectives: The Government of Niger enhances fiscal transparency measures and more readily investigates and prosecutes corruption as a result of an increase in investigative media reporting into corruption and fiscal malfeasance.

Outcomes:

- The pool of trained investigative journalists in Niger capable of reporting on corruption and fiscal malfeasance is considerably expanded
- Media reporting by Nigerien journalists on corruption, fiscal malfeasance, and budget irregularities is noticeably increased.
- The Government of Niger enacts necessary fiscal transparency measures as a result of investigative journalists reporting.
- The Nigerien public has a greater understanding of the “watchdog” role of the media regarding corruption and fiscal transparency and can use this information to pressure the Government of Niger for effective prosecutions against known corruption cases.
- Nigerien investigative journalists have enhanced communications with West African and international investigative journalist groups to coordinate on investigations, reporting, and best practices.
- Nigerien investigative journalists are better organized through a formal self-sustainable structure, capable of creating broader outreach to Nigerien media at large, civil society, educational institutions, and government officials.
- Nigerien investigative journalists also have a centralized online platform for support and technical collaboration to distribute published materials for citizen and international consumption.

Activities:

The Project core activity is to:

Recruit and train about 50 journalists on investigative best practices and journalistic ethics in Niger’s four largest cities: Niamey, Zinder, Maradi, and Agadez. Journalists selected in other locations will participate in the trainings at the nearest training location. If feasible, the project should reach journalists from all regions of Niger. The training may be carried out in conjunction with an internationally based investigative journalist organization. The aim of the training is to equip journalists for better production of press articles that could serve as a credible basis for the Niger official anti-corruption body: the *Haute Autorité de Lutte contre la Corruption et les Infractions Assimilées (HALCIA)* to carry out investigations

The following elements should be considered in carrying out the training:

- Training sessions will be conducted in each location of these four Niamey, Zinder, Maradi, and Agadez, at intervals throughout the 12-month implementation period, with a combination of representatives of West African and international investigative journalist organizations.

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY INNOVATION FUND

- Training will be specific to best practices to investigate government financial corruption, private sector financial corruption, fiscal forensic practices, ethics in reporting on government officials and private citizens, judicial practices on investigating and prosecuting corruption, and adherence to Niger's privacy and defamation laws.
- Training will be in consultation with the Nigerien High Authority for the Prevention of Corruption (HALCIA) and the National Court of Auditors (Cour des Comptes) to understand legal regulations and government procedures.
- The program implementers will work with the participants and trainers to formalize and register the network of Nigerien investigative journalists in order to provide a platform for support and technical collaboration for the investigative journalists in Niger. This network will be a sustainable resource maintained by members to run training and workshops for future iterations following the completion of the FTIF program. The network will maintain a website to post investigatory pieces and content for the benefit of the public.
- Throughout the project, implementing partners will work to ensure appropriate gender and ethnic representation.

Participants and Audiences:

About fifty (50) journalists will be engaged in the project's trainings. Some of the project's activities will involve collaboration with the HALCIA, la Cour des Comptes, and some CSOs performing in the field of fiscal transparency and combatting corruption.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: **12 months**

Number of awards anticipated: **1 award to a civil society organization or a consortium.**

Award amounts: **The funding amount is not likely to exceed \$210,000 based on post's estimate of needed budget items**

Total available funding: **\$210,000**

Type of Funding: ***FY2021 Economic Support Funds***

Anticipated program start date: ***October 2022***

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Cooperative agreement.

The U.S. Embassy Niamey anticipates awarding a cooperative agreement as a result of this NOFO. A cooperative agreement is distinguished from a grant in that it provides for *substantial involvement* between the Federal awarding agency and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity.

Examples of substantial involvement for this project may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Embassy Niamey will have to approve any documents printed before handout to the public.
2. Embassy Niamey will have to approve training agendas and participate in key trainings, if possible.

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY INNOVATION FUND

3. Support the recipient in problem identification and solving.
4. Facilitate and participate, if possible, during interaction with the government's institutions.

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed in *12 months*.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

Not-for-profit organizations, including civil society/non-governmental national and international organizations or consortiums of NGOs

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Project recipient may support cost sharing, but it is not mandatory.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a unique entity identifier (UEI), as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov

Applicants are only allowed to submit one proposal per organization. If more than one proposal is submitted from an organization, all proposals from that institution will be considered ineligible for funding.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Application Package

This Notice of Funding Opportunity will be posted on the *US Embassy, Niamey website*: <https://ne.usembassy.gov/embassy/embassy-solicitations/>, and on grants.gov. Application documents required to submit a proposal are available upon request at Niameygrants@state.gov

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

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

Content of Application

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars
- All pages are numbered

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY INNOVATION FUND

- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper, and
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

The following documents are **required**:

1. Mandatory application forms to downloaded at www.grants.gov

- **SF-424** (*Application for Federal Assistance – organizations*)
- **SF-424A** (*Budget Information for Non-Construction programs*)
- **SF-LLL forms.** *The SF-LLL is required only for applicants that may engage in lobbying activities*

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

3. Proposal (10 pages maximum): The proposal should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

- **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Introduction to the Organization:** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program, including information on all previous grants from the U.S. Embassy and/or U.S. government agencies.
- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed
- **Program Goals and Objectives:** The “goals” describe what the program is intended to achieve. The “objectives” refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable.
- **Program Activities:** Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Program Methods and Design:** A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal. Include a logic model as appropriate.
- **Proposed Program Schedule and Timeline:** The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **Key Personnel:** Names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. What proportion of their time will be used in support of this program?
- **Program Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees.
- **Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** This is an important part of successful grants. Throughout the time-frame of the grant, how will the activities be monitored to ensure they are happening in a timely manner, and how will the program be evaluated to make sure it is meeting the goals of the grant?
- **Future Funding or Sustainability** Applicant’s plan for continuing the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable.

4. Budget Justification Narrative: After filling out the SF-424A Budget (above), use a separate sheet of paper (Microsoft WORD format preferably) to describe each of the budget expenses in

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY INNOVATION FUND

detail. See section *H. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions* below for further information.

5. Attachments:

- 1-page CV or resume of key personnel who are proposed for the program
- Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner
- If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA should be included as a PDF file.
- Official permission letters, if required for program activities

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

Required Registrations:

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) in the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), “Debarment and Suspension.” Additionally, no entity listed on the EPLS can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the EPLS in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

All organizations applying for grants must register on www.SAM.gov and obtain a Unique entity identifier (UEI). Registration on SAM.gov is free of charge:

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE number

NCAGE application: Application page here:

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

Instructions for the NCAGE application process:

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

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

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

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

Step 2: After receiving the NCAGE Code, proceed to register in SAM.gov by logging onto:

<https://www.sam.gov>. SAM registration must be renewed annually.

Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than *June 30, 2022*

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY INNOVATION FUND

Funding Restrictions

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

- Construction is not an allowable activity under this award.
- Activities that appear partisan or that support individual or party electoral campaigns.
- Direct support or the appearance of direct support for any religious organization, to include repair or building of structures used for religious purposes.
- Military assistance of any kind, including weapons buy-back or rewards programs.
- Para-police (i.e., militias, neighborhood watch, security guards) and prison-related projects. This restriction includes no funding of any secondary need in a law-enforcement organization.
- Payments for any partner government, military, or civilian government employee salary or pension.
- Duplication of services immediately available through municipal, provincial, or national government.
- Funds for market research, advertising (unless public service related to grant program), or other promotional expenses.
- Expenses made prior to the approval of a proposal or unreasonable expenditures will not be reimbursed.
- Charitable or development activities;
- Fund-raising campaigns;
- Scientific research;
- Projects intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the organization;
- Projects seeking funds for personal use;
- Projects that require a participation fee.

Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted by email to Niameygrants@state.gov

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below.

Quality and Program planning (30 points)

The program idea is well developed, with detail about how program activities will be carried out. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline. Goals and objectives are clearly stated, and program approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results. The applicant describes how the expected results will be accomplished within the timeframe of the proposed award as well as anticipated long-term impacts. The applicant clearly explains how they will plan and complete the required activities. The applicant provides realistic milestones to indicate progress toward expected results and indicators as described in the program announcement.

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY INNOVATION FUND

Budget (20 points)

Has the organization submitted a budget in Excel form and a budget narrative?

The costs proposed are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results, which are clearly explained in the budget narrative. The budget provides details of calculations, including estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail sufficient for the calculation to be duplicated. The preponderance of the budget is spent on supporting the project participants/activities in country and includes costs dedicated to management, monitoring, and evaluation. Adequate travel costs are proposed using reasonable estimates of international and ground travel needs and costs. The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.

Monitoring and evaluation plan (20 points)

Has the organization set a well-defined M&E mechanism? The applicant explains how monitoring and evaluation activities will be carried out and who will be responsible for them. Applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes output and outcome indicators, and shows how and when those will be measured.

Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants (15 points)

The applicant demonstrates technical experience (e.g., has previously worked and/or has established contacts/partners) in the area of Niger with stakeholders in journalists training, combatting corruption, budget transparency and good governance. The applicant demonstrates access to local/national NGOs that could be mobilized to meet the unique needs of the project. The applicant includes letters of intent/commitment/agreement from proposed partners that detail concrete plans for partner involvement.

Sustainability (15 points)

Program activities will continue to have positive impact after the end of the program. Will the project be able to continue without additional investment? The sustainability plan outlines how the proposed project will be sustained beyond the initial award period. Capacity development, new trainings, and any tools or methods must be sustainable and last beyond this initial investment.

2. Review and Selection Process

A review committee will evaluate all eligible applications and notify all applicants on final decision.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

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

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY INNOVATION FUND

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

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

2. Payment Method:

The Federal Assistance Team should negotiate the payment schedule with the recipient. Payments can be made on either a reimbursement or advance basis using the payment request form SF-270. If advance payments are authorized, the amount of the advance payment should be limited to the immediate cash needs for the recipient to conduct the approved and scheduled activities of the award. Payments should be tied to program milestones or disbursed on an as-needed basis.

3. Reporting

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted. Recipients will, at a minimum, be required to submit quarterly Progress Reports and quarterly Financial Reports.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact: Niameygrants@state.gov.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Guidelines for Budget Justification

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

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program, for program staff, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. If the program involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

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

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY INNOVATION FUND

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

Contractual: Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also describe any sub-awards to non-profit partners that will help carry out the program activities.

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

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

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