

U.S. Department of State Global Engagement Center

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 19.010

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Synopsis:

This will be a two-stage competitive process. In the first stage, interested applicants will submit a concept paper (three-page limit) for GEC's initial review. Applications are due before 23:30:00 U.S. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on Monday, 29 April 2019. This pass/fail initial review will consider the concept's effectiveness in aligning with program objectives stated in Section I, as well as the applicant's capacity to deliver the concept. In the second stage, GEC will invite each passing applicant to submit a full proposal, based on its concept paper. These proposals will be thoroughly evaluated and scored by a merit review panel. The guidance included in this program announcement is relevant to the first stage, where applicants submit a concept paper. Guidance for the second stage, where full proposals are to be submitted, will be provided with the invitation to submit those full proposals. To provide additional information, GEC will convene a conference call at 10:00 a.m. EDT (14:00 UTC) on Friday, 22 March 2019. See section IV. D for important details.

Specifications, Deadlines, Systems Registration and Formatting Instructions:

All applications must be submitted through SAMS Domestic in English by the stated deadline. Potential applicants should start necessary registration processes swiftly. No extensions will be offered unless the submission portal is offline for six or more hours during the final 24 hours that the opportunity is open. An applicant (as defined by its DUNS number) may submit up to two concept notes. Potential applicants with multiple program offices are responsible to coordinate internally prior to submission, as more than two submissions under a single DUNS number will disqualify all submissions under that DUNS number.

Background Information about the GEC:

The Global Engagement Center is mandated to "direct, lead, synchronize, integrate and coordinate efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and foreign non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining or influencing the policies, security or stability of the United States and United States allies and partner nations." The GEC is authorized to provide grants or contracts of financial support to civil society groups, media content providers, NGOs, private companies, or academic institutions for the purposes detailed from page four onward and to select such recipients of funding in accordance with a process that ensures that each entity has the credibility and capability to carry out effectively these purposes. For further information on the GEC's mandate and authorities, please refer to Section 1287 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, as amended by Section 1284 of the FY 2019 NDAA.

Table of Contents

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION	3
II. AWARD INFORMATION	5
III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION	5
A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	5
B. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS	6
<i>B.1 Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Number System Registration (DUNS)</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>B.2 System for Award Management (SAMS Domestic) Registration</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>B.3 Registration in Other Systems</i>	<i>6</i>
IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION	7
A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS	7
<i>A.1 Required Documents</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>A.2 Application Formatting Requirements</i>	<i>8</i>
B. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION	8
C. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES	9
D. CONERENCE CALL FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	9
V. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS	9
VI. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION	10
A. AWARD NOTICES	10
VII. VETTING	10
VIII.AGENCY CONTACTS	10
APPENDIX I: THEORY OF CHANGE	12
APPENDIX II: INDICATOR REFERENCE SHEET	13

ADDITIONAL APPENDICES (ENCLOSED WITH RFA)

APPENDIX III: SAMS Domestic Account Creation

APPENDIX IV: Pre-submission Checklist

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Summary:

This will be a two-stage competitive process. In the first stage, interested applicants will submit a concept paper (three-page limit) for GEC's initial review. This concept paper should focus on innovative program ideas to achieve the objectives listed below. This pass/fail initial review will consider the concept's alignment with stated program objectives, as well as the applicant's capacity to deliver the concept. GEC will invite each passing applicant to submit a full proposal, based on its concept paper. These proposals will be thoroughly evaluated and scored by a merit review panel. The guidance included in this program announcement is relevant to the first stage, where applicants submit a concept paper. Guidance for the second stage, where full proposals are to be submitted, will be provided with the invitation to submit those full proposals. Each application must specify which of the lettered objectives it addresses; a single application may address more than one of the lettered objectives. However, no organization may submit more than two applications to this NOFO. Applicants with multiple program offices registered under the same DUNS number bear the responsibility for internal coordination prior to submission. More than two applications under the same DUNS number will disqualify all applications under that DUNS number. Applications that do not adhere to deadlines and formatting requirements will not be considered.

Countering Region Two Propaganda and Disinformation

1. Eligible Countries and Territories:

In this announcement, we seek to support projects globally that help to recognize, understand, expose, and counter Region Two propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining, interfering with, or influencing the policies, security, or stability of the United States and United States allies and partner nations. Please note that applications that focus on threat actors other than Region Two and its proxies will not be considered.

2. Program Objectives:

- a. Build global understanding of Region Two propaganda and disinformation to promote transparency and lead to informed decision-making.
- b. Highlight and reinforce the benefits of engagement with the United States and its people, allies, and partners to present an evidence-based view of world events.
- c. Promote independent journalism, credible voices, and traditional and social media free of state censorship and state-sponsored coercion.
- d. Support the development and dissemination of fact-based narratives and analysis to counter propaganda and disinformation directed at the United States and U.S. allies and partner nations.
- e. By promoting the benefits of transparent, fair, secure, and sustainable infrastructural and economic development, counter Region Two's propaganda and disinformation narratives about its model of governance and economic development.
- f. Expose Region Two's false narratives that enable coercive, corrupt or covert behaviors undermining or influencing the policies, security or stability of the United States, its allies or its partners.

- g. Facilitate the use of a wide range of technologies and techniques to counter disinformation and propaganda by sharing expertise and implementing best practices, and developing consortia and networks of like-minded partners.

3. Program Narrative:

Concept notes should propose a program that innovatively addresses the objectives listed above. The concept note should define the concept of the proposed program, and specify the goals and objectives of the program. Ideally, concept notes should also include project activities with a projected timeline, and provide a brief description of how the program's goals can be sustained following the end of the grant.

4. Budget Considerations:

Only a summary budget and brief budget narrative are required for this stage. The budget should offer cost-efficient resourcing for the programmatic effort. This should be presented on a single page and is not included in the three-page limit governing the narrative. Ideally, the summary budget appears as an embedded spreadsheet at the top of the page, with the budget narrative filling out the remainder of the page.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation Considerations:

Concept notes should include an approach to monitoring and evaluation that provides key indicators of change and how to measure them cost-effectively. To provide this information, concept notes should incorporate an explicit theory of change (why the proposed program is expected to achieve the anticipated results among the target audience). To explain how the applicant proposes to achieve the results and meet the objectives, the concept note should consider the activities the proposed program will do, the expected outputs (goods, services, etc.) arising from those activities, and the expected outcomes (how those activities will achieve the objective). Please refer to the Theory of Change Worksheet and Indicator Reference sheet for guidance in Appendix I and II. These additional worksheets are not subject to the concept note's three-page limit.

6. Funding:

Funding is subject to enactment of a full-year appropriation for the Department of State and the availability of funding.

Note Applicable to All Program Areas

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

- Social welfare projects;
- Paying to complete activities begun with other funds (however, new activities that build from lessons learned as the result of an earlier project are acceptable);
- Activities that appear partisan or that support individual or party electoral campaigns;
- One-time events, such as stand-alone conferences and one-off round tables (however, a series of workshops within a larger programmatic concept are acceptable);
- Medical research and clinical studies;
- Cultural presentations, cultural research, cultural clubs, or festivals, etc.; and

- Entertainment (e.g., social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, guided tours).

Applications that include any of the activities or costs above will not advance.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement
Estimated Number of Awards:	10-20
Estimated Total Program Funding:	Up to \$10,000,000
Estimated Award Ceiling:	\$2,000,000
Estimated Award Floor:	\$25,000
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	Not required
Length of Project Period:	Six to 12 months

Projects awarded under this announcement should be planned to start between August and September of 2019. GEC reserves the right to award more or less than the estimated program funding, or to award no funding at all. GEC also reserves the right to issue award funding under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Each application will be screened by the GEC to determine whether it meets all of the program eligibility requirements detailed below. Applications that do not clearly meet all eligibility requirements in both [Section A](#) and [Section B](#) will not advance to the technical review stage. Nothing can be added to an application once it has been submitted and the submission deadline has passed.

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The GEC may award to civil society groups, media content providers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs), private companies and academic institutions. The GEC does not have the authority to award to public international organizations. Before submitting, potential applicants should ensure that they are able to receive a cooperative agreement and prepared to adhere to the terms of 2 CFR 200. All applicants must be legally registered organizations and in possession of a DUNS number prior to applying to this announcement.

GEC welcomes applications irrespective of an applicants' race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability.

B. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To apply to receive federal funding, organizations must have a Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number and an active registration with the Department of State's System for Award Management (SAMS-Domestic).

B.1 Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Number System Registration (DUNS)

The DUNS number is a nine-digit number to uniquely identify business entities. To register, please follow the steps below:

1. Go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/pages/CCRSearch.jsp>.
2. Select the country or territory where your organization is physically located. Complete and submit the form. Organizations will need to provide basic information, including physical and mailing addresses, name and title of the chief executive, primary [Standard Industrial Code](#) (SIC), and annual revenue.
3. Typically, an organization can complete this registration in **one day** and have a DUNS number emailed to them. For technical difficulties in obtaining this number, please contact Dun & Bradstreet at: govt@dnb.com.

B.2 System for Award Management (SAMS Domestic) Registration

The Department of State's System for Award Management (SAMS Domestic) provides the only portal through which applications to this opportunity will be accepted.

B.3 Registration in Other Systems

Registration in other systems will be required before an eventual award can be made. In order to avoid delays, applicants may wish to engage those registration processes around the time that they submit their applications.

B.3.1 SAM.gov is a U.S.-government-wide registry for vendors doing business with the federal government and requires annual renewal. The system centralizes information about grant applicants/recipients and provides a central location for grant applicants/recipients to change organizational information. U.S.-domiciled organizations may skip to B.3.3. Foreign-domiciled organizations should please carefully review B.3.2.

B.3.2 For Foreign Organizations, after you have received your DUNS number, the next step is to obtain an NCAGE code. Do this before seeking SAM.gov registration.

a. Use the [NATO Support Agency \(NSPA\) CAGE tool](#) to see if an NCAGE/CAGE Code is already assigned: <https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/scage/CageList.aspx>

b. If your search does not identify an existing NCAGE/CAGE Code, click on the Request New CAGE button at the bottom of the search results screen.

Note: You must click the search button (the magnifying glass icon) or press the enter key to see the Request New CAGE button, even if you don't enter any information.

After you submit your request, you will immediately receive a request confirmation/validation e-mail message. A second e-mail message will come later once the NCAGE/CAGE Code request is processed (either assignment of the code or rejection of the request).

Note: The form will be sent automatically via e-mail to the National Codification Bureau (NCB) of the country you selected in your form.

After receiving your NCAGE code, please proceed to B.3.3.

B.3.3 The next step is to register with sam.gov. Sam.gov is a U.S. government website, and there is no charge to use it. Please click here: <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>

a. Applicants must maintain an active sam.gov registration, with current information, while their application is under consideration for funding. To keep a sam.gov registration active, applicants must renew it at least once each year. If an organization's registration expires, the organization cannot receive federal award funds until it is renewed.

b. To register, please follow the steps below:

1. Go to <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>
2. Select *Create User Account*, and then select *Create an Account* on the left-hand side of the screen under *Getting Started*. Organizations must have a DUNS number to begin the registration process.
3. Complete and submit the online registration form. If the applying organization already has the necessary information on hand, the online registration form takes approximately one hour to complete, depending upon the size and complexity of the applying entity. Because of the different steps in the process, it can take anywhere from three to 14 days to register with the system.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

All applications must include the application components detailed below. All application documents must be submitted in English. Organizations may submit no more than two applications to this NOFO. The GEC defines an organization by DUNS number. If more than two applications are received under a single DUNS number, GEC will not consider any of those applications. Organizations, especially large organizations, should take care to coordinate their submissions internally in order to avoid having their applications rejected.

Applications that do not include all the required documentation and do not meet the formatting requirements described in [Section A.1](#) and [Section A.2](#) below will not advance. Applicants should take great care to adhere to the page limits, as noncompliant applications will not be further considered. No additional documents, other than those mentioned in [Section A.1](#), will be accepted. Applicants may not add any materials to an application once it has been submitted and the competition deadline has passed.

A.1 Required Documents

Application for Federal Assistance:

The SF-424 family of forms (SF 424, SF 424A, SF 424B and SF-LLL) collect basic information on the applicant, the proposed project, the funding amount requested, and information about the announcement to which it is applying. The SF-424 family forms must be completed online in SAMS Domestic. Organizations that do not engage in lobbying should enter “N/A” wherever appropriate.

Concept Paper:

The concept paper shall not exceed three pages and must strictly adhere to formatting requirements.

Summary Budget and Budget Narrative:

This document shall not exceed one page.

Theory of Change Worksheet

The attached worksheet included in Appendix I may be expanded where necessary but shall not exceed two pages for initial review.

Indicator Reference Sheet

The attached worksheet included in Appendix II may be expanded where necessary but shall not exceed two pages for initial review.

Pre-submission Checklist

Please review this checklist carefully before uploading your application

A.2 Application Formatting Requirements

The required font for the concept paper and for the budget narrative is 12-point, Times New Roman. It is to be single-spaced, with one-inch margins (left, right, top, and bottom). Also, applicants should ensure all pages are numbered consecutively and not exceed the stipulated page limits.

GEC prefers that the concept paper be submitted as an MS-Word document (.doc or .docx), with the summary budget presented as an embedded spreadsheet. However, submissions will be accepted as pdfs. Please note that applications that do not adhere to the formatting requirements will not advance to the technical review stage. Applications that exceed the page limits will not advance.

B. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Applicants must submit any and all applications through the SAMS Domestic portal. No application will be accepted by email. No application will be accepted through grants.gov.

GEC encourages applicants not to wait until the final day of the competition to submit their documents. Unless SAMS Domestic is offline for six or more hours during the final 24 hours that the opportunity is open, GEC will not extend the opportunity.

C. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Applications must be time stamped before 23:30:00 U.S. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on Monday, 29 April 2019. **There will be no grace period, and any application not received by the application deadline will not advance.**

GEC encourages applicants not to wait until the final day of the competition to submit. Early submission provides time for applicants to alert GEC (gec-programs@state.gov) of any technical difficulties, affording sufficient time to resolve difficulties before the deadline. Although, GEC will work with applicants to resolve technical issues, it is not in a position to grant exceptions to the submission requirements, notably the submission deadline, as outlined in this announcement.

D. CONFERENCE CALL FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To provide additional information pertinent to potential applicants, and to respond to questions, GEC will convene a conference call at 10:00 a.m. EDT (14:00 UTC) on Friday, 22 March 2019. GEC requires that participants in this call not record the first portion of the call. By joining the call, potential applicants agree to abide by this instruction. The GEC host will advise when recording may begin. Any applicant found to have recorded the first portion of the call (all of the call until the recording embargo is lifted by the GEC host) will be disqualified from further consideration under this NOFO. If an eventual awardee is found to have recorded the first portion of the call after the award is made, that recording will constitute grounds to terminate the award for cause. See [Section VIII](#) for the call-in number and conference ID.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

The GEC is committed to ensuring a competitive and standardized process for awarding funds. Applications will be screened initially by GEC to determine whether applicants meet the requirements and priorities outlined in [Section I](#); meet the eligibility requirements outlined in [Section III](#); and submitted the documents (and only those documents) required by [Section IV](#). **Applications that do not meet these requirements will not advance to the technical review stage.**

All applications that proceed to the technical review will be evaluated by U.S. Government subject-matter and/or country-specific experts and will be evaluated with the following questions acting as a guide:

- 1) Does the concept paper address the objectives outlined in [Section I](#)?
- 2) Does the concept paper propose activities that address the problem identified?
- 3) Does the summary budget appear reasonable with respect to the activities proposed?
- 4) Does the reviewer wish to see a full application on this concept paper? If not, why?

Applicants need to receive a “Yes” on all four questions (above), from a majority of the reviewers to be invited to submit a full application.

VI. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. AWARD NOTICES

Five days after the closing of the announcement, each applicant will be notified via email that its application was received. This notification will include an application log number for applicants to use to track its applications. This notification does not signify that the application advanced to the technical review stage.

Applicants who do not advance to the technical review stage will be notified within 15 days after the closing of the announcement. The authorized representative and program point of contact listed on the SF-424 will receive the notification via email. If an applicant does not receive such a notification, its submission was put forward for review.

GEC expects to notify applicants who advanced to the Technical Review stage of the status of their applications by May 21, 2019. The authorized representative and program point of contact listed on the SF-424 will receive such a notification via email.

The foregoing projected dates make the assumption that no lapse of appropriations that affects the Department of State occurs between the date that this NOFO is posted and May 21, 2019.

VII. VETTING

Organizations which receive awards pursuant to this Notice of Funding Opportunity need to be aware of U.S. Government vetting requirements. Applicant organizations and key personnel will be reviewed for previous performance and for potential ineligibility to receive federal funds. As well, all implementer personnel involved in grants and cooperative agreements bearing on Region Two are subject to additional scrutiny. The information about personnel that will be required includes the names of personnel, their dates and places of birth, and current position of employment. In some cases, additional sensitive information may be required to be disclosed. For multi-year awards, vetting may be required on a periodic basis. Vetting will be conducted irrespective of nationality. The GEC will not make funds available to any person or organization which states that it cannot provide the information sought. If an organization ceases to cooperate with vetting subsequent to award, GEC may be required to terminate the award. Any person or organization that anticipates having reservations about participating in the vetting process may wish to resolve them before submitting an application under this NOFO.

VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions regarding this funding opportunity including: completing an application, financial and grants management issues, or technical matters, contact:

GEC Programs Unit

Gec-programs@state.gov

Please note that all questions will be addressed via SAMS Domestic to ensure that all potential applicants have access to the same information at the same time. In order to post GEC's responses to application questions in SAMS Domestic, it will be necessary that GEC from time to time temporarily withdraw this opportunity; please understand that you may receive an email notification of the withdrawal and that this withdrawal is only temporary, to allow GEC to add new information.

SAMS Support

For questions regarding SAMS Domestic, please contact the Help Desk:

(866) 577-0771

(202) 401-5282

samsupport@state.gov

Conference call-in number and conference ID

To provide additional information, GEC will convene a conference call at 10:00 a.m. EDT (14:00 UTC) on Friday, 22 March 2019. By joining this conference call, your organization agrees to the terms and conditions in section IV. D.

USA Toll-Free: 888-330-1716

USA Caller Paid: 713-353-7024

Access Code: 5123688

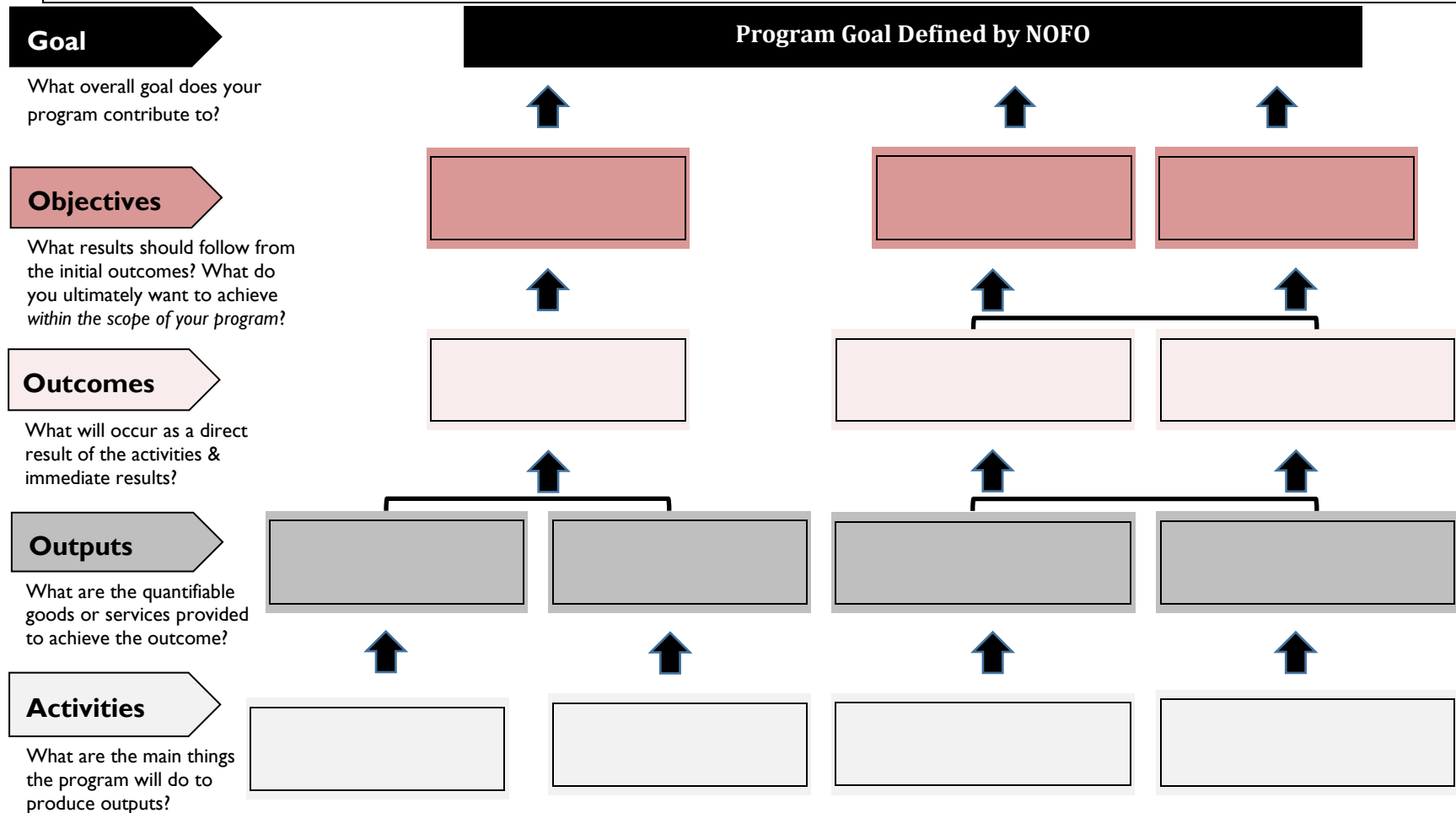
APPENDIX I: THEORY OF CHANGE

Instructions:

Step 1: Fill in the boxes below with your inputs, activities, outputs, etc. If you need more boxes, just copy an empty box and paste.

Step 2: Move the brackets and arrows around to show the relationship between your ideas.

Step 3: Check your Theory of Change. Read it from bottom to top. Each component's relationship should be an "If-then" statement, i.e. if a component on the bottom is fulfilled, then the component on the top will be possible. If more than one components on the bottom make one component on the top possible, use a bracket to show this relationship. When your "if-then" check works from bottom-up, now read it from top-down. Do those "if, then" statements still hold true?



APPENDIX II: INDICATOR REFERENCE SHEET

Instructions:

1. **Reference your Theory of Change worksheet.** Copy the objectives and outputs into the corresponding lines in the chart below.
2. **List any outputs/indicators you will track.** Be sure to include any indicators required in the NOFO.
3. **List your frequency of collection.** How often you will track that indicator (quarterly, annually)?
4. **List your means of verification** –How will you collect the information/data required to calculate the indicator? (Ex: surveys, check-in sheets, scores on a test, focus groups, beneficiary interviews, etc.)
5. **Write any assumptions.** Assumptions are external conditions necessary to achieve the goal. Not every indicator will need an assumption.
6. Add or delete any lines to make the chart suit your program.

Indicators	Frequency of Collection	Means of Verification	Assumptions
<i>Objective:</i>			
<i>Output Indicators – These should show how you’ll measure each output in your Theory of Change Worksheet</i>			
<i>Outcome Indicators - These should show how you’ll measure each outcome in your Theory of Change</i>			