



# Request for Applications

## *Strengthening Media Coverage*

### **Advancing Community Empowerment in Southeastern Myanmar (ACE)**

RFA No.: ACE-P4795-20-5

Date of issuance: November 3, 2020

Bidders' Conference: November 17, 2020

Due date for questions: November 21, 2020

Questions and applications should be sent via email to [myanmargrants@pactworld.org](mailto:myanmargrants@pactworld.org)

Release date for response to all questions: November 30, 2020

Closing date: December 8, 2020

Application (including technical proposal and budget) are due by 5:00 pm December 8, 2020 via email to [myanmargrants@pactworld.org](mailto:myanmargrants@pactworld.org). Emailed submissions must contain the subject “**RFA-Strengthening Media Coverage - name of organization submitting application**”.

Estimated award date: March 1, 2021

## **1. Background on Pact**

A nonprofit international development organization founded in 1971, Pact works on the ground in nearly 40 countries to improve the lives of those who are challenged by poverty and marginalization. At the heart of Pact is the promise for a better tomorrow. Pact strives for a world where all people are heard, capable and vibrant. Pact is a recognized leader in integrated development. Our integrated approach combines interventions in purposeful ways to address development challenges holistically, always tailored to local needs. And we focus on systemic change to build an environment for sustainable success. Pact has been working in Myanmar since 1997.

## **2. Purpose Statement**

Pursuant to the authority granted under USAID award AID-482-A-17-00001, Pact is pleased to announce the release of a request for applications (RFA) for funding to support implementation of Advancing Community Empowerment in Southeastern Myanmar (ACE). ACE is an integrated community development project with the goal of empowering vulnerable communities to engage in local decision-making processes. This RFA is issued as a public notice to ensure that all interested, qualified, and eligible organizations have a fair opportunity to submit applications for funding. For the purposes of this RFA, “organizations” are defined as non-profit, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), or faith-based organizations (FBOs).

ACE is seeking to fund activities that **strengthen media coverage of issues affecting vulnerable communities in southeastern Myanmar with a focus on reporting on**

**health, education, livelihoods, disaster management, and governance issues.** ACE anticipates providing multiple awards **up to 1 year** in duration **and up to USD \$100,000** in value. The total estimated amount of funding for the RFA is approximately USD \$1,000,000; however, ACE reserves the right to adjust the RFA amount, subaward ceilings, and activity timelines or issue no subawards at all.

### 3. Program Description

#### 3.1. Program background

**Advancing Community Empowerment in Southeastern Myanmar (ACE)**, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Burma, aims to support communities in their empowerment processes by reducing vulnerabilities, promoting community participation in decision making, and strengthening mechanisms for more responsive and accountable local governance. ACE is implemented by Pact in partnership with international consortium partners Mercy Corps, Community Partners International, and Save the Children. The project also partners with a broad range of local organizations, service providers, and private companies to address community development priorities.

ACE uses integrated development approaches that promote local engagement and leadership and create links between communities, service providers, and governance systems to meet locally prioritized needs. The project's goal is vulnerable communities are empowered to engage in local decision-making processes. ACE aims to achieve this goal through three objectives:

- Reduce community vulnerabilities
- Strengthen community participation
- Strengthen local governance systems

#### 3.2. Geographic area

The geographic area for this RFA is southeastern Myanmar. ACE defines southeastern Myanmar as: Kayah State, Kayin State, Mon State, southern Shan State, northern Tanintharyi Region, and eastern Bago Region. Applicants proposing activities to strengthen media coverage in or on these geographic areas are invited to submit proposals through this RFA. Applicants may be based in the southeast, neighboring Thailand, or have a national presence with coverage in southeastern Myanmar. Preference will be given to ethnic media outlets and organizations with strong connections and networks among ethnic communities in southeastern Myanmar.

Though not required, Pact welcomes proposed activities in areas where cooperation with other ACE activities and partners can be mutually beneficial and that support efforts to reach marginalized and underserved communities.

#### 3.3. Intended impact

Through this RFA, Pact will fund activities that increase media coverage and strengthen reporting on issues affecting vulnerable communities in southeastern Myanmar, in particular on health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, livelihoods, disaster management, and local governance issues, which are typically under-reported in mainstream media. It will support activities that improve public access to timely and accurate information on key issues affecting vulnerable communities in southeastern Myanmar and help raise awareness by highlighting local efforts to empower them. These activities will contribute to ACE's goal of more responsive and inclusive local decision making in southeastern Myanmar.

Activities should have the intended impact of improving media coverage and reporting, both quantity and quality, on key issues in southeastern Myanmar. Reporting should focus on ACE's key sectoral areas of health, WASH, education, livelihoods, disaster management, and local governance; however, reporting may also include broader issues such as economic development, infrastructure projects, land rights, conflict, displacement, migration, social issues, and other topics related to ACE's main sectors.

Reporting should make a particular effort to highlight issues in ethnic-administered areas and mixed-control areas, in addition to government-controlled areas and should include voices and perspectives from local communities and vulnerable groups. Preference will be given to ethnic media outlets and organizations with strong connections and networks among ethnic communities in southeastern Myanmar, which are able to produce quality news stories and investigative reports in ethnic languages as well as Myanmar language. Dissemination of content may be conducted through various formats, including print, online (websites and social media), and video production to achieve best impact.

Intended impact of funded activities may include:

- Improved media coverage on challenges facing remote and vulnerable ethnic communities in southeastern Myanmar to access basic services for health, education, and livelihoods
- Greater public awareness through media coverage of how local communities in southeastern Myanmar are working to improve access to basic health, education, and livelihood services and mitigate natural disasters
- Improved understanding among local leaders and decisionmakers on needs of vulnerable communities and their demands for improved services and more inclusive local governance
- Media coverage that includes more diverse local perspectives and voices from vulnerable ethnic communities
- Reporting that highlights how local development projects are impacting vulnerable communities in southeastern Myanmar in terms of health, education, and livelihoods
- More consistent and in-depth reporting on key issues affecting vulnerable communities in southeastern Myanmar in ethnic and Myanmar languages
- Investigative feature reporting on issues such as land grabbing, illegal development, and extractive industries that highlight impacts on community health and livelihoods
- More in-depth reporting on how ethnic communities are coping with the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of ethnic health providers

Applicants are not limited to these illustrative impacts. Applicants are expected to articulate a clear problem statement regarding media coverage in southeastern Myanmar and realistic expected impacts resulting from the proposed activity.

### **3.4. Intended target audience**

The target audience is communities, leaders, and decision-makers in southeastern Myanmar, as well as the general public. Applicants should have a wide enough reach and existing networks to provide news and reports to a broad segment of the population in southeastern Myanmar, as well as the ability or a strategy to reach more broadly to a national audience and to diaspora communities internationally as relevant. Target audiences may be reached through various

media, including traditional print publications, TV, radio, online news services via websites, apps, or social media platforms, and video or streaming services.

### **3.5. Expected role of sub-awardee in the program**

Applicants will be responsible for leading activities that improve media coverage and reporting on key issues in southeastern Myanmar. Reporting should take into account ACE's sectoral focus on health, WASH, education, livelihoods, disaster management, and local governance.

Activities may include, but are not limited to, news reporting, investigative reporting, feature reporting, action research, policy advocacy, training of reporters, and other relevant activities. The applicant may include reasonable costs related to media production, including equipment, travel, communications, training, staffing, dissemination/distribution/broadcasting, and appropriate institutional or overhead costs.

Applicants are expected to articulate a clear problem statement regarding barriers to media coverage in southeastern Myanmar, particularly in covering key issues affecting vulnerable groups, and present an appropriate theory of change and realistic expected impacts resulting from the proposed activity.

Illustrative activities may include:

- Hiring reporters to expand coverage of sectoral issues impacting communities in southeastern Myanmar
- Providing trainings to existing reporting staff on the sectors covered by ACE to produce more articles and higher quality reporting on these issues
- Hiring reporters or translators working in local languages and ethnic areas in southeastern Myanmar to improve inclusion of local voices and ethnic perspectives in reporting
- Increasing social media reporting coverage in multiple languages
- Supporting expenses for field reporting and in-depth investigative reporting
- Reinforcing and expanding existing news dissemination and distribution channels
- Investing in production capabilities for enhanced multi-media coverage

Applicants are not limited to these illustrative activities above. Applicants are expected to articulate a clear problem statement regarding media coverage in southeastern Myanmar and present an appropriate theory of change, activity plan, and realistic expected impacts resulting from the proposed activity.

### **3.6. Program indicators and data reporting for partners**

Applicants should design programs that demonstrate how they will support the program's results areas, which ACE monitors to assess whether the project is achieving the desired outcomes. Below is the list of program results areas under ACE's objectives to which sub-awardees under this RFA will contribute. A proposed project may address some or most of the results areas, but it must include at least one. Applicants are expected to propose indicators aligned with these results areas as part of the applicants' Monitoring and Evaluation Plans.

- Health care access and coordinated service delivery improved
- Education access and services improved

- Sustainable livelihoods promoted
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) improved
- Community capacity for preparedness, mitigation and response to disasters increased
- Community capacity and leadership skills improved
- Participatory community decision making capacity improved
- Trust and reconciliation enhanced
- Trust and collaboration between communities and local authorities increased

Applicants would be expected to systematically track and document their media coverage outputs into a consolidated media coverage document as part of its regular reporting to Pact. This would highlight key information such as: date, channel, location, language, coverage, feedback/impact, etc.

## 4. Application Submission

### 4.1. Grantee eligibility

This competition is open to any non-governmental organization or media company that is not established in the United States, with preference for local Myanmar-based organizations or media organizations based along the Thai-Myanmar border. To be minimally eligible for funding, applicants must provide full, accurate, and complete information and comply with the following conditions. Organizations must:

- Be able to complete implementation within the stated timeframe of one year
- Have previous experience of not less than 2 years reporting on social issues
- Be currently operating or can demonstrate ability to operate in southeast Myanmar with previous experience working on proposed areas
- Be currently engaged or demonstrate ability to engage with targeted populations
- Not charge a profit on any grant awarded by ACE

### 4.2. Funding

Pact anticipates these grants will be cost-reimbursable or fixed amount awards. Grant type will be based on the program description and the results of the partner's pre-award risk assessment, which Pact will conduct prior to issuance of the award. Grants are non-profit assistance awards; applicants, even if private sector for-profit entities, may not charge a profit to ACE. However, reasonable overhead costs may be included in the cost application budget.

Subject to the availability of funds, Pact may award up to \$100,000 in funding for a successful applicant for a maximum of one year. Pact anticipates awarding multiple grant awards to successful applicants. Negotiations will be conducted with successful applicants only. Pact reserves the right to adjust the RFA amount, subaward ceilings, and activity timelines, and to award any or none of the applications submitted.

### 4.3. Application submission deadline

Applications must be submitted by **December 8, 2020** at 5:00pm Myanmar time.

### 4.4. Late submissions, modifications, and withdrawals of application

At Pact's discretion, any application received after the exact date and time specified for receipt may be considered ineligible for consideration. Applications may be withdrawn by written notice via email or in person by an organization or the authorized representative.

#### 4.5. Conflict of interest clause

Applicants must provide disclosure of any past, present, or future relationships with any parties associated with the issuance, review, or management of this solicitation and anticipated award. Failure to provide full and open disclosure may result in Pact having to re-evaluate selection of a potential applicant.

#### 4.6. Submission method for questions

Submit questions electronically to [myanmargrants@pactworld.org](mailto:myanmargrants@pactworld.org). The deadline for questions is **November 21, 2020 at 5:00 pm**.

The email subject line should read “Questions – RFA Strengthening Media Coverage – *name of organization submitting application*.”

All questions and answers will be shared with all interested applicants.

#### 4.7. Submission method for final application

Submit applications electronically to [myanmargrants@pactworld.org](mailto:myanmargrants@pactworld.org). ACE is not receiving paper applications for this RFA.

The email subject line should read “RFA Strengthening Media Coverage – *name of organization submitting application*.” Technical applications and attachments must be submitted in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF. Budgets must be submitted in Microsoft Excel.

#### 4.8. Grant solicitation bidders conference

**Date(s):** A bidders’ conference will be held on **November 17, 2020 at 10:00 am**. All applicants are encouraged to attend, but no more than two people from one organization.

**Location:** Online; weblink will be provided to confirmed attendees.

**Confirmation:** An email confirming attendance must be sent to [myanmargrants@pactworld.org](mailto:myanmargrants@pactworld.org).

**Language:** The conference will be held in Myanmar and English.

## 5. Application Format

### 5.1. Overall requirements

Applicants will develop their applications based on their understanding of needs, their prior institutional experience, and their determination of the approaches that would be feasible and successful. In all cases, applicants shall clearly explain the rationale for the proposed approaches chosen. To facilitate the competitive review of the applications, Pact only will consider applications conforming to the following.

- The application narrative should be clear, concise, and properly organized.
- If in English, the document should be in 12 point Times New Roman font, single spaced, with 1 inch/2.5 cm margins.
- Full applications should not exceed 16 pages (including 14 pages for technical application and 2 pages for cost application); page maximums for specific parts are provided in sections 5.2 and 5.3.
- Applications should be written in English or Myanmar language.

- Paper copies of the applications will not be accepted.
- Please note that technical and cost applications should be separate files.

All applications received by the deadline will be reviewed for responsiveness to the specifications outlined in these guidelines and the application format. Applications should take into account the evaluation criteria.

## 5.2. Technical application

Limit of fifteen (15) pages.

Please use the Technical Application templates in Attachment A (Sub-Awardee Risk and Responsibility Assessment Cover Page) and Attachment B.

### Sub-Awardee Risk and Responsibility Assessment Cover Page (1 page)

#### I. Technical Approach and Feasibility of Program Design (5 pages)

- The applicant's technical approach should include:
  - A description of the applicant's prior work as it pertains to the project objective
  - A description of the approach and activities to be undertaken
  - A description of the geographic coverage area
  - Theory of change
  - Anticipated results
- The application should discuss the applicant's approach for engaging with local actors, building partnerships with key stakeholders, and creating linkages with other relevant development activities/programs.

#### II. Management and Staffing Plan (2 page)

- The management and staffing plan should show the roles and responsibilities of all staff who will participate in the program.
- Applicants should provide a summary of the skills and experience of the key staff who will work on the project.

#### III. Past Performance (3 page)

- Describe the organization's previous experience with producing media content covering social issues and relevant experience working in southeastern Myanmar.
- Demonstrate experience in engaging with relevant local organizations, local government institutions, networks, and initiatives.

#### IV. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (2 page)

- Describe how the project will collect data and ensure data quality of the relevant indicators from Section 3.5 of this RFA.
- The applicant should provide additional indicators and targets.

#### V. Work Plan (2 pages)

- Provide a detailed work plan for activities clearly identified in the program description and the applicable time frames.

## 5.3. Cost application

Limit of two (2) pages.

Please use the template in Attachment C for a detailed and summary budget and cost share plan as appropriate. The summary budget should include all costs anticipated within the following line items:

- **Salaries/fringe benefits:** all costs associated with employees working under the proposed project, including the level of effort expected from each salaried employee and the costs of fringe benefits
- **Travel and per diem:** travel, lodging, and per diem for staff need to implement the project
- **Equipment rental:** equipment that must be rented (i.e., vehicles) to enable program implementation
- **Workshops/training/events:** workshops, development of information materials, studies, information dissemination, etc.; other direct costs associated with implementing activities under the project
- **Operating/administrative costs:** rent, communications, electricity, telephone, audit, and office supplies; Pact will not fund office start-up costs or proposal development costs.
- **Cost Share or Matching:** Grantees are encouraged but not required to contribute resources from their own, private or local sources for the implementation of this project. Cost sharing refers to the resources a recipient contributes to the total cost of an agreement. Cost-sharing may be cash or in-kind contributions but, by definition, may not include USG funds or USG-funded in-kind contributions. Cost-sharing must be used for the accomplishment of program objectives and must consist of allowable costs under the applicable USG cost principles (see 2 CFR 200.306 for more). The proposed cost share must be included in the budget.

#### 5.4. Relevant documents

Applicants are required to provide registration or other relevant documents, such as letters of support and recognition from local governments/authorities. These documents do not count toward the technical and cost application page limits.

## 6. Evaluation of Applications

### 6.1. Review process

ACE will establish a technical review committee that includes representatives from various departments and external staff. All technical reviewers will be subjected to a screening process to eliminate any conflict of interest. Evaluation will be based on the criteria set forth in section 6.2. The process will be completed within approximately 15 business days. The review panel, using the criteria detailed below, will rate applications and make funding recommendations to the program's grants management unit.

Pact reserves the right to make any number of awards or none at all. Pact is not responsible for any costs associated with the development of applications.

To facilitate the review of applications, applicants must organize the narrative sections of their applications with the same headings and in the same order as the selection criteria.

## 6.2. Evaluation criteria for the application

In evaluating the applications, Pact will examine overall merit and feasibility, as well as the specific criteria relevant to each component, as elaborated in the table below. Applicants should note that these criteria both serve as the standard against which all applicants will be evaluated and serve to identify the significant matters that applicants should address in their applications. Pact will instruct the technical review committee to evaluate all applications according to the criteria as established and weighted in the following table.

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Points</b>
<b>I. Technical Approach and Feasibility of Program Design</b> The review team considers a strong project design to be one that is informed by local circumstances and needs. Proposals must be in line with the technical areas outlined in section 3.	35
<b>II. Management and Staffing Plan</b> The review team will evaluate the extent to which the management and staffing plans demonstrate the applicant's ability to effectively implement proposed activities responsive to this RFA. Reviewers will assess whether the organization has proposed sufficient level of effort to achieve stated results.	10
<b>III. Past Performance</b> Reviewers will evaluate whether the organization has managed successful projects of similar size and scope in the geographic areas specified.	15
<b>IV. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan</b> Reviewers will assess how the applicant intends to collect data, ensure data quality, and measure progress using the relevant indicators in section 3.5 and any additional custom indicators proposed by the applicant. Reviewers also will assess the feasibility of proposed indicator targets and consider the extent to which the application includes a plan to use the data for reflection and learning.	5
<b>V. Work Plan</b> Reviewers will assess the proposed timeline for implementing proposed activities for feasibility.	10
<b>VI. Cost Evaluation</b> The cost application will be evaluated for reasonableness, allocability, allowability, cost effectiveness, realism, and financial feasibility.  Pact reserves the right to determine the resulting level of funding for the grants being selected for this RFA, regardless of what the applicant specifies in the cost application.	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## 6.3. Supporting documentation for Pre-Award Assessment/site visits

After the application evaluation process, any selected applicant will be required to complete a Financial Pre-Award Assessment in order for Pact to determine if the organization has the capacity to perform successfully under the terms and conditions of the proposed grant. As part of the Pre-Award Assessment process, applicants may be asked to submit additional documentation to illustrate that the organization has the capability to implement the grant. Site visits may be conducted by Pact staff to evaluate the organization in these areas.

## 7. Terms and Conditions

### 7.1. Standard provisions

The Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations as applicable will apply to these grants. Applicants can find the provisions at <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mab.pdf>. Printed versions of these provisions are available upon request. Additional USAID provisions specifically pertaining to Burma and the ACE Cooperative Agreement will also apply as relevant.

### 7.2. Permission for use and disclosure

By submitting an application under this RFA, the applicant consents to the disclosure of the documents submitted by the applicant to the reviewers involved in the selection process. Please note that all reviewers are bound by non-disclosure agreements.

### 7.3. Disclaimers

- Pact may cancel the solicitation and not award any funds.
- Pact may reject any or all applications received.
- Pact may adjust the RFA or subaward ceiling or timeframe noted in this document.
- Issuance of solicitation does not constitute award commitment by Pact.
- Pact reserves the right to disqualify any application based on applicant's failure to follow solicitation instructions.
- Pact will not compensate applicants for their response to the solicitation.
- Pact reserves the right to issue an award based on initial evaluation of applications without further discussion.
- Pact may choose to award only part of the activities in the solicitation or to issue multiple awards based on the solicitation activities.
- Pact reserves the right to waive minor application deficiencies that can be corrected prior to award determination to promote competition.
- Pact may contact applicants to confirm contact person, address, and that the application was submitted for this solicitation.
- Pact may contact listed past performance references without notice to the applicant. Pact also reserves the right to contact other past performance information sources that the applicant did not list in the application.
- By submitting an application, the applicants confirm they understand the terms and conditions.
- Pact requires applicants to adhere to ethical journalism standards and media Code of Conduct.

## 8. Attachments

The following documents are considered part of this RFA:

- A. Sub-awardee Risk and Responsibility Assessment cover page
- B. Technical application template
- C. Cost application budget template