

Call for Expressions of Interest (for external distribution)

Background

Northeast Connection, implemented by Creative Associates International on behalf of USAID, aims to strengthen the resilience of communities vulnerable to violent extremist infiltration and conflict. By targeting communities in Adamawa, Yobe, and Borno States that are not yet under the control of violent extremist organizations (VEOs), the Activity will mitigate the grievances that make communities vulnerable to violent extremism, while building social cohesion within and across communities in northeast Nigeria. In addition to helping northeastern Nigerians create a stronger foundation and become more resilient to VEO infiltration and conflict, the Activity will develop local capacity to respond to emerging threats and vulnerabilities.

The Capacity Building Activity Description

Generally, in Nigeria, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play a critical role in addressing important issues in communities, like food insecurity, poverty, conflict prevention, education, inter-religious dialogue, and CVE. A mapping of CSOs carried in the Northeast in 2017 revealed the proliferation of young and emerging community-based groups, associations, and organizations involved in some great work in the region. These organizations are acknowledged by the government and communities as important partners when designing effective strategies to counter the threat of conflict and violent extremism, and efforts to build social cohesion. However, Northeast Connection recognizes that often due to underfunding, many local organizations lack the strong operational and management systems required to effectively manage and implement activities and programs according to the standards and satisfaction of many donors. Most of these organizations are in need of technical and operational capabilities to function properly and serve as viable vehicles for increasing community resilience and delivering essential support to more underserved and vulnerable hinterland communities. Therefore, NE Connection is implementing a comprehensive capacity building activity that seeks to institutionalize learning. Unlike the traditional approach of organizing periodic capacity building training events, this carefully crafted capacity development effort focuses on providing targeted organizational development assistance and tailored coaching and training to CSOs in the NE with an emphasis on creating more organizational sustainability. This activity directly contributes to NE Connection's key program outcome of affecting *Change in Institutional Capacities of CSOs*, which means creating positive shifts in the structures and capacities of CSOs to ultimately strengthen their ability to design, implement and monitor locally led conflict mitigation and resilience building.

NE Connection's capacity building activity for nascent and emergent CSOs in the BAY states will be implemented in three phases from October 2021- September 2022. The phases will include:

- **Phase 1 (approximately 1 month): *Establish Activity Foundations*.** During this phase, a team of dedicated organizational development (OD) consultants will work with each selected CSO to conduct participatory self-assessments using USAID's Organizational Capacity Assessments (OCAs) tool. After the assessments are completed, the consultants will work with each CSO to develop a capacity building action plan that will be used to identify and prioritize areas of systems improvement, training needs, and support to develop management capacity areas such as governance/leadership structures and financial, organizational, and project management etc.
- **Phase 2 (approximately 3 months): *Implement Capacity Building Action Plans*.** During this phase, each CSO will become a part of a CSO cohort in their state and be assigned an Anchor organization, which is a well-qualified mentoring organization that is based or experienced in the BAY states and seeks to play an enduring role in strengthening local communities in the NE region. CSOs will receive one-on-one support from their Anchor organization to implement their capacity building action plan,

ensuring the right training, coaching and mentoring is provided to address key the capacity gaps identified during the OCAs. At this stage Anchor organizations will work closely with OD consultants to provide tailored support and technical oversight to CSOs in three (3) ways:

1. Improve organizational development, including operational systems and financial management
 2. Improve grant proposal development knowledge and abilities
 3. Improve technical capacity and activity development
- **Phase 3 (approximately 6 months): *Intensive Mentoring, Coaching, and Activity Implementation.*** By this stage, organizations are expected to apply to grants and/or implement activities (a minimum of one) having fully completed phase 1 and 2. The organizations may apply to NE Connection's Annual Program Statement (APS) for a chance to receive a small grant through the open and competitive process. However, to fulfill requirements under this phase they may alternatively apply to grants from other donors or implement community or privately funded activities. Throughout this phase, Anchor organizations will provide intensive and dedicated coaching and mentoring to support concept/grant proposal development, project management and implementation, project performance monitoring, and reporting. This will help CSOs apply what they have learned. This is also a shared learning and networking stage during which Anchor organizations will organize exchanges between CSOs or support networking forums to facilitate learning and exchange of knowledge. By the end of this phase, an OCA survey will be conducted with each organization to gauge improvement and change from phase one. Each organization that successfully completes all three phases will be awarded with a graduation certificate.

This capacity building activity heavily emphasizes learning by doing. As such, CSOs that are selected to participate are encouraged to continue working on their active projects and to seek new opportunities throughout the phases. Each phase will be conducted in such a way that will enable CSOs to continue their daily work and planning, while receiving coaching and training support that they can apply in real time.

Intended Applicants

This call for expressions of interest intends to inform and mobilize potential applicants from the BAY states to engage in a small CSO cohort in their state and actively participate in the entirety of NE Connections Capacity Building program. Organizations that may apply can be from one of the following categories:

- 1) Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
- 2) Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- 3) Community, Youth, or Women Associations
- 4) Faith-based organizations (FBOs)

NE Connection will select organizations for this program based on skills and experience at two levels.

- *Tier 1* broadly refers to civil society or community-based organizations in their **nascent** stage. This category includes organizations that may be in the beginning stages of their development, having few nascent skills and internal systems and need to focus on developing transactional elements of organizational effectiveness (such as procurement, human resources, financial management and governance). However, they have strong leadership and have exhibited passion, credibility, and potential to be strong community-level partners as they emerge into existence.
- *Tier 2* broadly refers to organizations in the **emergent** or developing stage. This category includes organizations that have more nascent and well-developed skills and stronger internal systems. They have generally developed governance structure and moderately demonstrated management capacity, with a need to focus on strengthening some institutional areas and the

scale and quality of service delivery/grant implementation. They demonstrate a desire to develop meaningful activities for their communities and possess a degree of popular support in the sector or operational area due to successful performance on past projects in their state.

Applicant organizations must meet the following minimum qualifications to be determined as eligible for consideration for this program.

At the Tier 1 level:

- Must be based in one the BAY states
- Must have or be in the process of legal registration with any of the following: local, state, or federal government of Nigeria
- Must have one of the following: a vision, a mission, or core values that aligns with community works around any of the following areas, including peacebuilding/conflict mitigation, women empowerment, youth engagement or entrepreneurship, countering violence extremism (CVE), reintegration, social cohesion, community development, civil society advocacy, community resilience, or related thematic areas.
- Must have at least a basic staffing structure of a minimum of five (05) number of staff (no more than 30% should be part-time or volunteers).
- Must have a functional bank account
- Must have previous experience implementing grants, community projects or other activities

At the Tier 2 level:

- Must be based in one of the BAY states.
- Must have legal registration with local, state, or federal government of Nigeria entities, such as corporate affairs commission (CAC) or EFCC/SCUMUL certification to operate
- Must have a functional bank account and some financial management systems or processes
- Must have a vision, mission, OR values statements that aligns with community work around any of the following areas, including peacebuilding/conflict mitigation, women empowerment, youth engagement or entrepreneurship, countering violence extremism (CVE), reintegration, social cohesion, community development, civil society advocacy, community resilience, or related thematic areas.
- Must have a staffing structure with a minimum of eight (8) staff (no more than 30% should be part-time or volunteers).
- Must have previous experience implementing donor-funded grants, projects, or other activities

Expectations and Responsibilities

Selected organizations will be expected to:

- Participate in the entire spectrum of the Capacity Building program to be eligible to apply to the annual program statement (APS) grant mechanism
- Provide enough time for staff to attend trainings and other capacity building events, including Executive Directors/Team Leads that will be well engaged
- Sign a declaration of commitment and nominate two (02) focal staff who will remain points of contact throughout the spectrum of this capacity building intervention
- Positively collaborate with other CSOs during the Capacity Building process, remain supportive and share from organizational experience and learning.

- Actively look for opportunities to support or coordinate with community members and leaders especially during the mentoring, activity development, and implementation stage

NOTE: the NE Connection program will ONLY be providing training and technical assistance under this intervention there is no direct funds being provided. All opportunities for funding will happen through application to the annual program statement (APS) and through an open competition.

Selection Factors and Ratings

The selection factors listed below are presented by major category, so that applicants will know which areas require emphasis in the preparation of information. Applicants will note that these factors serve as the standard against which all information will be evaluated. However, scores will be based on the specific criteria within these factors that pertains to the Tier in which an organization applies. Applicants in Tier 1 will not be evaluated against applicants in Tier 2.

Factor 1: Skills and Experience

Vision, Mission and Values

- alignment with NE Connection's objectives and thematic areas
- clearly articulated vision, mission, or core values
- previous activities or engagement that demonstrate stated vision, mission, or values
- ideas or experience that demonstrate a passion and commitment to supporting and improving local communities

Operations and Program Management

- presence of administrative and operational processes, policies, and systems (relative to Tier definition)
- demonstrated ability in community involvement
- demonstrated ability in stakeholder outreach or collaboration
- demonstrated experience with simple and clear activity reporting
- demonstrated ability to develop activity/project ideas that are meaningful for their communities

Past Performance

- demonstrated ability to successfully implement of projects or activities
- demonstrated ability to gain credibility/trust in the communities
- demonstrated ability to manage donor or private funds in a responsible manner

Factor 2: Essay on Participation and Applying Learning

- essay succinctly addresses all four (4) key questions outlined
- essay is coherent and well articulates answers to questions with strong ideas or examples

Factor 3: Satisfactory Past Performance/Reference Checks

- quality of past performance and level of positive or negative feedback from communities or peers.

Basis of Rating: Applicants who clearly meet the minimum qualifications for their indicated Tier

will be further evaluated based on scoring of the organizational profile/history template, supporting documents, essay and past performance reference sheets required under the Method of Application Section.

Factor 1 = 30 points

Factor 2 = 30 points

Factor 3 = 40 points

Total Possible Points: 100

Application Closing Date

5.00pm 4th February 2022

Method of Application

Organizations that are interested in this capacity building experience are required to send an expression of interest package with the following:

- A. Cover letter expressing clearance to apply for a slot in either the Tier1 or Tier 2 cohort of this intervention – on letterheaded and signed by the Executive Director/CEO. (One page max)
- B. Complete the organizational Expression of Interest biodata form with relevant and updated details as required. All fields should be filled out per the instructions. Include any other proof documents as needed to certify the organization meets the minimum qualifications for eligibility.
- C. An essay of not more than 1000 words (or three pages max) that answers succinctly the following questions:
 - i. Why they want to participate in this opportunity
 - ii. What they will bring to share with other peer organizations
 - iii. What they hope to gain from the process
 - iv. How they intend to apply learning after the support
- D. Completed Past Performance or Reference Sheets
- E. Organization “declaration of commitment” to participate throughout the three phases of the NE Connection Capacity Building Program. This should be written on letterhead and signed by ED/CEO (One page max).

Note: Complete package will include the above documents converted into PDF files, properly labelled in a zip folder named **NECCapacityBuildingEOI** and sent as attachment not later than **5.00pm** 4th February, 2022 to the following email: grants@connection-nigeria.com - title of email should reflect the organization is applying for either Tier 1 or Tier 2 considerations.