# Northeast Connection RFA – Building the Capacity of Women’s Groups and Female Leaders

**Subject:** Northeast Connection RFA # 1576

# Title of Opportunity: Building the Capacity of Women’s Groups and Female

**Leaders**

**Issue Date: February 28, 2022**

# Deadline for Questions/Clarifications: Closing Date:

**March 18, 2022, 5:00 PM Local Time**

**March 27, 2022, 5:00 PM Local Time**

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Building Community Resilience to Violent Extremism and Conflict in Northeast Nigeria Activity (Northeast Connection) is seeking concepts from eligible applicants to implement a program titled *“Link Existing Women for Peace platforms with female leaders and groups”.*

NE Connection will host three Pre-Application Conferences throughout the BAY States for this RFA. The dates and times for the conferences are below and more information can be found in Section D of Attachment 1. For planning purposes, interested applicants are requested to provide the name(s) of their representative(s) ***(no more than 2)*** to the “Grants Department” via email at [grants@connection-nigeria.com](file:///C%3A/Users/JessicaKa/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/UTMFW280/grants%40connection-nigeria.com) prior to the date of the conference.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Location** | **Venue**  | **Date and Times** |
| Maiduguri | Grand Pinnacle Hotel, Jimna Road Pompomari Byepass Maiduguri | 03/15/2022 9AM – 4PM |

Interested organizations are encouraged and responsible for reading the full RFA to understand program objectives, eligibility and submission requirements, and the evaluation process. Northeast Connection bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from the transmission or conversion process. An award/awards will be made to the eligible and responsive applicant(s) whose concepts(s) and subsequent full application(s) best meet the program objectives and selection criteria contained in Sections A and E of Attachment 1 respectively.

A concept must be submitted directly to Northeast Connection using one of the following methods: a) electronically via the online grants management portal (<https://smart.fluxx.io>), or b) electronically via email at grants@connection- nigeria.com, to the attention of "Grants Department." Applications must be received no later than the deadline stated above.

Any questions concerning this RFA must be submitted in writing using one of the above communication methods. Responses to questions received will be furnished to all potential applicants periodically through amendments to this notice.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Northeast Connection, nor does it commit Northeast Connection to pay for any costs incurred by a potential applicant while preparing/submitting questions or a concept. All preparation/submission costs are at the applicant's expense. All concepts submitted are at the risk of the applicant.

Thank you for your interest in this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Albert Pam Chief of Party

Northeast Connection

**Attachments**

**Attachment 1:** Request for Applications **Attachment 2:** Technical Application Template **Attachment 3:** Budget Template

**Attachment 4:** Provisions

**Attachment 5:** Certifications

**Attachment 1: Request for Applications (RFA)**

1. **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

# Background

Northeast Connection (NE Connection), implemented by Creative Associates International on behalf of USAID, aims to strengthen the resilience of communities vulnerable to violent extremist infiltration and conflict. The activity targets communities in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states to mitigate the grievances that make communities vulnerable to violent extremism while building social cohesion within and across communities in northeast Nigeria. In addition to supporting northeastern Nigerians create a stronger foundation and become more resilient to violent extremist organization (VEO) infiltration and conflict, the NE Connection will support in developing local capacity to respond to emerging threats and vulnerabilities.

The over a decade violent conflict and insurgency in Northeast Nigeria has led to one of the worst humanitarian crises in Africa, with over 10 million people in need of urgent assistance. The insurgency in NE continues to negatively impact thousands of women and girls, often casting them voluntarily or forcefully recruited by the insurgents.

Historically, Northeast Nigeria is highly patriarchal, women’s education and formal labour are limited in the region, as men are seen as breadwinners while women are considered as caregivers. The power dynamics in the northeast have frequently excluded and marginalized women from political, social and economic spectrum, thereby making them more vulnerable to the risk of recruitment by VEOs. Women are also largely excluded from local peacebuilding efforts to tackle the ongoing insurgency and strengthen community’s resilience. And majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region are women.

This context has contributed to limited opportunity for women from being included in key decision-making processes and advocating for their rights, thereby creating a conservative gender ideology, which are further exploited by VEOs in their target of young women and girls to serve as eligible wives for male recruits, cooking and carrying out non-kinetic daily tasks. This complicates women’s leadership role in peacebuilding efforts that transcends just inclusion of women in playing substantive roles in peacebuilding, CVE and in strengthening community resilience.

It is therefore imperative to empower women with requisite leadership skills and expand their influence beyond caregiving roles to significantly participate and contribute to peacebuilding and resilience efforts by leading peacebuilding and CVE initiatives in Northeast communities.

# Purpose

Under this RFA, the selected grantee will strengthen the capacity of local women leaders and women’s groups, organizations, associations and cooperatives to lead peacebuilding efforts in northeast communities, expand their influence in peace processes, and advocate for their needs.

The grantee is expected to design and implement activities that support the above goal and the key objectives outlined in Section 4 below. Through a competitive grant process, NE Connection will award one grant to one (1) competent local organization to implement activities in two LGAs in Borno state. The geographic scope of this RFA includes:

Hawul LGA – Vinadam ward – Kumba, Tashan Gawta and Vinadam communities

Shani LGA – Shani Ward - Shani, Lamor and Anguwan Hausawa I communities

The selected organization will be responsible for identifying prominent local female leaders and women’s groups in the target communities of intervention. The selected organization will also be expected to support women’s organizations, associations, and cooperatives create positive linkages with government officials and other important civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) through dialogue forums. The grantee is expected to train the local women leaders, women’s groups, and women’s organizations on gender approaches in peacebuilding and countering violent extremism (CVE).

The women’s groups will be supported to identify issues in their communities, particularly around CVE and peacebuilding, and organize dialogue sessions with appropriate government officials, CSOs, and CBOs to address underlying grievances that make communities vulnerable to violent extremist organizations influence. The selected organization will be responsible for hosting at least twelve dialogue sessions (6 per LGA). This approach should be inclusive of women of different strata and should allow for participation of vulnerable women within and other minority groups.

* 1. **RFA Theory of Change**

*IF the capacity of local female leaders in peacebuilding, countering violent extremism and engaging with local government authorities to address VE threats is enhanced, THEN women will be able to effectively participate in the process of addressing VE issues in their communities BECAUSE women play critical roles in developing solutions to conflict and challenging and delegitimizing extremist narratives.*

# Objectives

***Objective 1***: To build the capacity of local female leaders, women’s groups and organizations in peacebuilding and CVE in target communities of southern Borno.

* ***Expected Result 1.1:*** *Enhanced understanding of gender-approaches to peacebuilding processes in countering violent extremism in target wards and communities.*
* ***Expected Result 1.2:*** *Strengthened resilience of local women leaders, women’s groups and organizations against VEO threats in target wards and communities.*

***Objective 2*:** To promote positive linkages between women’s groups and government officials through information sharing and inter-community exchanges for community's resilience against VEO and conflict risks.

* ***Expected Result 2.1:*** Reduced feeling of neglect and marginalization among vulnerable women leaders and women’s groups in focal communities
* ***Expected Result 2.2:*** Improved collaboration between local women’s groups, women’s organizations, and the government

# Illustrative Activities

The proposed activities for this RFA should be guided by the Theory of Change (ToC) and RFA objectives. Grantees are encouraged to propose activities that are applicable to their proposed geographic locations and previous experience. NE Connection has prepared the following illustrative examples of the types of activities that grantees could propose to implement under this grant, they include but are not limited to:

* + - Map existing local women leaders, women’s groups, organizations, associations, and cooperatives across Hawul and Shani LGAs of Borno state.
		- Capacity Building activities on gender-approaches to peacebuilding and CVE
		- Intercommunity exchange activities for collaboration with women’s groups, government officials, CSOs, and CBOs on peacebuilding initiatives
		- Women-led community-based dialogues and other initiatives for peacebuilding, resilience, and CVE.

All activities implemented under this RFA will follow COVID-19 protocols, including but not limited to, the mandatory use of non-medical face masks and limiting sessions to a maximum of 20 people.

* 1. **Gender and Youth Approach**

NE Connection will favor technical applications that demonstrate adequate gender representation in all activities to ensure opinions and input from women and youth are reflected in decision-making and outcomes of program interventions. Activities should incorporate separate experiences of men, women, and youth, as it relates to conflict, violence, and violent extremism, and build upon findings that women — mothers in particular — are recognized as important actors in achieving peace and countering VEO narratives. Technical applications should not only ensure the inclusion of women and youth in program activities, but also provide women and youth with the skills and knowledge to meaningfully participate so that their voices are heard and respected.

* 1. **Draft Output and Outcome Indicators for this RFA**
* # of local women participating in a substantive role or position in community peacebuilding process
* # of local women leaders, women’s groups, organization, association or cooperatives trained on gender approach to peacebuilding, advocacy, lobby and CVE (disaggregated by organization type)
* % Increase in knowledge of women leaders, women’s groups, organization, association, or cooperatives trained on gender approach to peacebuilding, advocacy, lobby and CVE
* # of women-led community dialogues conducted across LGAs
* # of participants at women-led community dialogues across LGAs
* # of women-led community-based initiatives conducted to promote peace and women’s resilience against VEOs threats and conflict risk.
* Evidence of reduced feeling of neglect and marginalization among vulnerable women groups in target communities
* % of women groups, organization, association or cooperatives attesting to enhanced capacity in peacebuilding and CVE
1. **Award Information**

1. **Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated**

Subject to the availability of funds, Northeast Connection plans to award one grant under this RFA. The estimated value of the individual award in Borno **8,220,000.00 NGN ($20,000).** A negotiated award amount may or may not fall within this range. Furthermore, Northeast Connection is not obligated to issue awards/an award up to the amount of funds available.

**Northeast Connection reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.**

1. **Period of Performance**

The estimated start date will be upon signature of award, on or about **June 01, 2022.** The anticipated duration of Northeast Connection’s support is 3-4 months.

1. **Award Mechanisms**

Northeast Connection’s final determination on award mechanism will be based on its assessment of the applicant’s capacity and risk prior to award. If this assessment identifies weaknesses or deficiencies that call into question the applicant’s ability to manage an award, Northeast Connection may elect to remove the applicant from consideration or select a mechanism more appropriate for the applicant’s current capacity.

The most common award mechanisms issued by Northeast Connection are fixed amount awards (FAAs) and in-kind awards. Under FAAs, payments are performance based and issued to an awardee after its successful completion of pre-defined programmatic milestones. Under in-kind awards, Northeast Connection: a) makes payments on behalf of the awardee and/or b) procures/delivers goods and services on behalf of the awardee.

Northeast Connection also may elect to issue a cost-reimbursable award to an awardee in instances when: a) the applicant demonstrates sufficient financial management capacity to implement this mechanism and b) the mechanism is determined to be appropriate for implementing the program description.

1. **Eligibility Information**

1. **Eligible Applicants**

To be eligible for award under this opportunity, an applicant must demonstrate that it falls into one of the grantee categories below:

* A registered civil society organization, community-based organization, faith-based organizations, and for-profit making organizations.
* Be registered and working in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations, including, but not limited to, pertinent local laws and status (for example evidence of registration with the National Planning Commission, Corporate Affairs Commission, State Emergency Management Agency (Yobe & Adamawa), or Agency for the Coordination of Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Activities (Borno). In lieu of official registration, a grantee may show proof of effort to secure registration, exemption from registration, or show cause why such registration is either not optional or practicable.
* Proof that the entity or organization is not a debarred organization.
* Individuals and governments are not eligible to apply.

1. **Cost Sharing or Matching**

Cost sharing is not required under this funding opportunity.

1. **Limit on Number of Applications**

An eligible organization may submit only one application. Please note that issuance of this RFA does not in any way obligate Northeast Connection to pay for costs incurred by a prospective applicant to prepare and submit an application.

1. **Application & Submission Information**

1. **Content and Form of Activity Concept Submission**

As a first step, interested applicants are requested to submit an activity concept. Each concept will be evaluated in accordance with Section E below. An applicant whose concept is accepted will be required to submit technical and cost applications for funding. The concept must be submitted using the template provided in Attachment 2, which provides instructions on the required content and format. An applicant not adhering to these instructions, risks being considered nonresponsive to the requirements of the RFA and eliminated from further consideration. All information must be submitted in English. If an application is in any other language, it will be considered nonresponsive and eliminated from further consideration.Finally, ***plagiarism is grounds for disqualification.***

1. **Submission Guidance and Assistance**

Northeast Connection may provide guidance to an applicant while it prepares an application. However, when such guidance is offered, Northeast Connection’s role is limited to **facilitating the application process, ensuring that proposed activities contribute to the program objectives stated in Section A, and co-designing/creating activities with the applicant**. Actual preparation of the technical and cost applications is the strict responsibility of the applicant.

1. **Method for Submission**

Northeast Connection will accept Activity Concepts via the following methods:

1. Email to grants@connection-nigeria.com
2. Electronically via its online grant’s management portal, which can be accessed at the following link: <https://smart.fluxx.io/>.

Applicants are encouraged to use the online portal as it significantly reduces administrative burden for both the applicant and Northeast Connection. If the applicant would like to submit its application via the online grant’s management portal, but has not previously registered in the portal, it must complete an initial registration form, which can be found at the following link: <https://smart.fluxx.io/apply/connection>. After Northeast Connection reviews and validates the form, the applicant will receive an email with its username and password.

Regardless of the submission method chosen, an applicant should retain for its records one (1) copy of its application and all enclosures that accompany it.

1. **Registration Requirements for U.S. Government Funding**

To be eligible for award under this solicitation, a non-U.S. NGO applicant may be required to obtain a valid Duns & Bradstreet number (DUNS). Information regarding DUNS registration can be found at http://www.dnb.com/get-a-duns-number.html. The program will notify non-U.S. NGO applicants of DUNS requirements where applicable. A U.S. NGO applicant must provide a valid DUNS number, be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application and continue to always maintain an active SAM registration with current information during which it has: a) an active award with the U.S. Government or b) an application or plan under consideration by the U.S. Government or a U.S. Government implementing partner. Information regarding SAM registration can be found at: http://www.sam.gov.

Northeast Connection will not issue an award to an applicant until it has complied with the applicable requirements. As the registration process may take several weeks to complete, applicants are encouraged to register early. Please note that completion of an early registration does not constitute any commitment on the part of Northeast Connection to make an award.

1. **Submission Date & Time**

Applicants must submit their Technical and Cost Applications prior to the closing date and time listed on the cover page. Applications that are submitted late are at risk of not being considered for review. Late applications are marked as “late.” Northeast Connection reserves the right to accept and include late applications in the review and award process only when: a) Northeast Connection considers it to be in its best interest and b) applications received on time have not yet been opened and reviewed.

1. **Funding Restrictions**

An applicant that receives an award under this RFA is responsible for ensuring that it only incurs post-award costs that were approved and determined to be allowable, allocable, and reasonable by Northeast Connection during pre-award negotiations. Furthermore, Northeast Connection will not reimburse a successful applicant for any costs it incurs prior to the date it signs a grant agreement with Northeast Connection.

1. **Questions & Answers**

Any questions concerning this RFA should first be directed to the Northeast Connection representative assigned to the applicant. Alternatively, please direct questions to the “Grants Department” via email at grants@connection-nigeria.com.

1. **Application Review Information**
2. **Application Review Process**

An applicant’s Activity Concept application will be reviewed by Northeast Connection’s senior program staff to ensure that the activities proposed contribute to the program objectives in Section A above. During these reviews, the applicant may be requested to submit a revised application and/or respond to clarifying questions. However, Northeast Connection reserves the right to award without requesting clarifications or additional details in an application.

The Chief of the Party or authorized delegee makes the final decision on all awards made under the RFA.

1. **Pre-Award Assessment**

An apparently successful applicant must first demonstrate that it possesses or can obtain the necessary management competence to practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided. To this end, the applicant may be required to submit additional information about its organization (e.g., Articles of Incorporation or other documentation substantiating the legal character of the applicant or key individuals within its organization) for vetting purposes. Final issuance of an award will be contingent upon the timely receipt of the information requested and the successful completion of the Program’s vetting process and pre-award capacity and risk assessment.

Northeast Connection will complete the pre-award capacity and risk assessment while the applicant’s technical and cost applications are in review. The results will be used by Northeast Connection to make a responsibility determination and, if a decision is made to proceed with award, select the appropriate award mechanism.

1. **Conflict of Interest**

Throughout the evaluation process, Northeast Connection will take every step to ensure that Northeast Connection staff do not have any conflicts of interest or the appearance of such with any organization/individual applying in response to this RFA. An individual shall be considered to have the appearance of a conflict of interest if that individual or that individual’s spouse, partner, child, close friend, or relative works for, is negotiating to work for, and/or has a financial interest (including being an unpaid member of a Board of Directors) in any organization that has applied for review by Northeast Connection. Northeast Connection staff shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from any applicant.

1. **Award Administration Information**

1. **Award Notices**

A Notice of Intent to Award will be provided to the point of contact listed in the application of the apparently successful applicant(s). Please note that such notification does not constitute or guarantee an award. An apparently successful applicant must first demonstrate that it possesses or can obtain the necessary management competence to practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided. To this end, the applicant may be required to submit additional information about its organization (e.g., Articles of Incorporation or other documentation substantiating the legal character of the applicant or key individuals within its organization) for vetting purposes. Final issuance of an award will be contingent upon the timely receipt of the information requested and the successful completion of the Program’s vetting process and pre-award capacity and risk assessment.

1. **Award Administration**

Any award resulting from this RFA will be administered in accordance with provisions provided in Attachment 4.

1. **Reporting**

Reporting requirements (including a reporting schedule) will be provided in the award document for any award resulting from this RFA. The specific reports required will depend on the award type and project duration; however, examples may include the following:

* Monthly Report(s) with activity updates for the reporting period, photos of project activities, challenges encountered during implementation, activities planned for the next reporting period, etc.
* Final Program Report including lessons learned, success stories, any impacts achieved vis-à-vis the funded project’s goal and objectives, etc.
* Financial Reports including planned obligations, actual expenditures, funds remaining, etc. as well as a detailed Final Financial Report.

Please note that issuance of final payment will be contingent upon Northeast Connection’s receipt and acceptance of the Final Financial Report and/or Final Program Report. For Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs), final payment is also contingent on the completion of the final milestone and acceptance of its deliverables/means of verification.

1. **Program Income**

Any income generated under a grant awarded through this solicitation must be reported immediately to the program's Grants Department and will be evaluated and negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

**Northeast Connection reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.**

**Attachment 2: Activity Concept Template**

Interested applicants may obtain a full copy of the RFA and Activity Concept template, which includes detailed instructions by (a) Google Drive <https://mega.nz/folder/Edg2WKxD#ny0zDlCriYfdMLVEkJ8nkw> (b) making a written request to Grants Team at grants@connection-nigeria.com, or (c) when you log in to the program’s SMART grants portal (<https://smart.fluxx.io/>).

**Attachment 3:** **Provisions**

Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303mab.pdf>

Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards to Nongovernmental Organizations

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303mat.pdf>

**Attachment 4: Certifications**

1. **Conflict of Interest Avoidance Certification**

When signing a grant agreement with Northeast Connection, a successful applicant’s authorized representative will also be required to sign a certification affirming that the entity she/he represents (the Grantee) does not have any conflicts of interest pertinent to the award. Such conflicts would include, for instance:

* Personal or professional relationships with entities that could directly benefit from the award.
* Personal or professional relationships with other staff persons involved in administering the award.
* Personal or professional relationships with government officials that may have influence or oversight of matters directly pertaining to the award.
* Holding formal or informal positions in organizations that would be relevant to the award.
* Holding any financial interest in any entity that would be impacted by the award.

By virtue of the Grantee’s actions in carrying out the award, the authorized representative’s certification will affirm that she/he would endeavor to ensure that conflicts of interest or their appearance do not arise, understanding that such conflicts of interest would arise when there are situations in which the Grantee is involved in multiple interests (financial, personal, or otherwise) that could be conceived of as corrupting the motivation of herself/himself or the Grantee in the discharge of duties pertinent to the award.

Should such real or perceived conflicts arise, the authorized representative’s certification will affirm that the Grantee will immediately inform the Chief of Party of the project with which the award is associated to discuss the matter.

1. **Other Certifications**

When signing a grant agreement with Northeast Connection, a successful applicant will be required to sign the *Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient* referenced here: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf>.