**Northeast Connection RFA - Outreach campaigns to promote tolerance and counter violent extremist messaging and misinformation in the NE RFA**

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| **Subject:** | Northeast Connection Request for Application (RFA) |
| **Title of Opportunity:** | **Outreach campaigns to promote tolerance and counter violent extremist messaging and misinformation in Kwaya-Kusar, Hawul, and Shani LGAs of Borno State** |
| **Issue Date:** | **February 07, 2022** |
| **Questions/Clarifications:****Closing Date:** | **February 19, 2022, 5:00 PM WAT local time**  **March 07, 2022 5:00 PM WAT local time** |

Through this RFA, the Northeast Connection (NE Connection) seeks your assistance to implement activities in support of the program description provided in Section A of Attachment 1. The program description in this RFA may be updated periodically to account for any adjustments in program strategy.

NE Connection will host one Pre-Application Conference in Borno state. The date and time for the conference is 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 Bypass Maiduguri | 02/18/2022 9AM – 1PM |

Applicants will be asked to submit an Activity Concept 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](file:///C%3A/Users/JessicaKa/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/UTMFW280/grants%40connection-nigeria.com), to the attention of "Grants Department." Applications must be received no later than the deadline stated above. Eligible and responsive applicant(s) will be invited to proceed to the next stage, which applicants will co-design/create with NE Connection to complete full technical and cost applications. Awards will be made to eligible and responsible applicants whose proposed activities best meet the program objectives.

To be eligible for award, an applicant must meet the eligibility requirements described in Section C and submit complete applications in accordance with the submission instructions described in Section D.

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

*Note: AIDAR clause incorporating 22CFR Part 228 prohibits NE connection from procuring any good/services that support police and other law enforcement activities. Therefore, acceptance of grant applications that support or work with security agencies is contingent on 1) USAID approval, and 2) the applicant providing all documentation and information requested by NE Connection for the Leahy vetting process.*

Thank you for your interest in this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Albert Pam

Chief of Party

Northeast Connection

**Attachments**

**Attachment 1:** Request for Application

**Attachment 2:** Activity Concept Template

**Attachment 3:** Provisions

**Attachment 4:** Certifications

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

1. **Program Description**
2. **Background**

Nigeria Northeast Connection (NE Connection) Program, 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 helping northeastern Nigerians create a stronger foundation and become more resilient to violent extremist organization (VEO) infiltration and conflict, the NE Connection will help develop local capacity to respond to emerging threats and vulnerabilities.

Communities in NE Nigeria have a long history of shared culture, values, and customs that are unique in fostering community bonds and solidarity, which are reflected in the peaceful nature of communities, especially in the pre-insurgency era in the region. However, while infiltrating communities, VEOs seek to divide the communities and drive them towards conflict by providing negative messages that undermines government policies, misinterpretation of religious provisions and teachings. Their efforts reinforce ethnic tensions and stereotypes that VEOs are also able to capitalize on. This has also been further exacerbated by the ongoing mass defection of JAS/ISWAP members following the rift that led to the death of JAS leader Abubakar Shekau. To remain relevant during the mass defections, the commanders and loyalists of the JAS leader have started an aggressive campaign to recruit vulnerable community members through inciteful religious sermons, cash inducements, loans, gifts, and the provision of food items.

Findings from NE Connection’s research partner, Opinion Research Business International, throughout FY 2021 Q1-Q4 show that VEO messaging on social networks is widespread and the most common messages are reported to contain anti-government propaganda that fuels dissatisfaction with authorities and promotes insurgency. Facebook is by and large perceived as the platform mostly used by VEOs. In abduction and hostage situations, videos depicting victims are designed to elicit a response from the government or international community to negotiate for release. VEOs also use social media platforms to spread messages of terror, which can serve multiple purposes, like instilling fear into populations and feeding the notion that VEOs wield great power—despite recent reports that the current rate of defection from Boko Haram is at an all-time high. The negative VEO messaging has the tendency of misinforming citizens in the Northeast with the aim of destabilizing the social fabric of communities as well as shared values and customs within NE communities. Consequently, there is a need for positive programming to counter these narratives in these communities in NE Nigeria.

1. **Purpose**

Under this RFA, NE Connection, via grantees, will engage traditional and religious leaders, youth and women groups, broadcast media organizations, teachers, trade unions, etc. through different campaign approaches to popularize alternative narratives to VEOs’ negative messages. Doing so will strengthen community cohesion and increase citizens’ consciousness for peaceful coexistence and tolerance in the NE. Through a competitive grant process, NE Connection will award one grant to a competent local organization to implement activities in Borno state.

The geographic scope for this RFA includes three LGAs, three wards and nine communities as indicated below:

* Hawul LGA – Kwaya Bura Ward – Kwaya Bura, Ngilvi and Durkwa communities
* Kwaya, Kusar LGA – Kwaya Kusar Ward – Gashina, Sabongari and Maiba communities
* Shani LGA – Kubo Ward – Jeki, Kubo and Kubo Dungu Primari Communities

The awardee is expected to propose unique activities that will help NE Connection tackle widespread VE messaging and misinformation through the development of constructive messages that counter such narratives, develop methodologies to translate CVE messages in local languages and formats for dissemination, conduct community outreach campaigns, peace-based radio dramas, jingles, develop and distribute Information, Education and Communication Materials (IEC), as well as other methodologies that deepen understanding and constant communication to counter VE. This assistance will increase citizens’ consciousness for peaceful coexistence and tolerance in NE.

1. **RFA Theory of Change**

***IF*** *Northeast communities are sensitized about the negative effects of VEO messaging and misinformation and alternative narratives to VEOs messages are shared with vulnerable communities,* ***THEN*** *citizens’ consciousness for peaceful coexistence and tolerance in vulnerable communities of the NE would be increased.*

1. **Objectives**

***Objective 1*:** To popularize alternative narratives to VEOs messaging and misinformation in vulnerable communities through outreach campaigns in the NE.

* ***Expected Result 1.1*** *Alternatives to VE messages developed and shared to counter misinformation on social media*
* ***Expected Result 1.2*** *Information, Education and Communication materials produced and distributed in the communities of intervention to counter VE misinformation.*

***Objective* 2:** To increase citizens consciousness for peaceful coexistence and tolerance in vulnerable communities in the NE through campaigns and sensitization.

* ***Expected Result 2.1*** *Awareness created for the need for peaceful co-existence in vulnerable communities through campaigns and sensitization.*
* ***Expected Result 2.2*** *Improved tolerance among vulnerable communities in the Northeast*
1. **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:

* Design messaging to counter VE narratives and messages, including in local languages (Hausa, Kanuri, Babur)
* Design social media campaigns and posts to counter VE messaging and misinformation
* Conduct community outreach campaign
* Conduct various interactive sessions, and
* Broadcast peace-based radio dramas, jingles etc., to counter VE messaging and misinformation
* Organize sensitization campaigns

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 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 community outreach campaigns organized
	* # of community members reached through outreach campaigns
	* # of community members who participate in outreach campaigns (disaggregated by gender)
	* # of social media campaigns and posts designed to counter VE messaging
	* # of people reached on social media via campaigns and posts
	* # of host national inhabitants reached through USG-assisted public information campaigns to support peaceful resolution of conflicts
	* % of respondents who report changing their mind positively towards VEOs after listening to radio programme
	* # Of IEC materials to counter VE misinformation produced and distributed
	* % of people sensitized by the radio jingle, drama and other IEC materials who can demonstrate knowledge on how to respond to signs of VE.
2. **Award Information**
3. **Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated**

Subject to the availability of funds, Northeast Connection plans to issue one award under this RFA. The total value of the award is estimated to be up to **N32,880,000.00 ($80,000)**. 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 is **May 2022.** The anticipated duration of Northeast Connection’s support **is 3-4 months.**

1. **Award Mechanisms**

Northeast Connection will determine which award mechanism to use based on its assessment of an applicant’s capacity and risk prior to award. If this assessment identifies weaknesses or deficiencies that question the applicant’s ability to manage an award, Northeast Connection may elect to remove the applicant from consideration under this funding opportunity 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 to an awardee are performance based and issued after its successful completion of pre-defined programmatic milestone, es. 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) an 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**
2. **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 Creative to pay for costs incurred by a prospective applicant to prepare and apply.

1. **Application & Submission Information**
2. **Content and Form of Application 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.

Northeast Connection will not issue an award to an applicant until it has complied with all 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 the Program 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 must be submitted in writing using one of the communication methods described in the cover letter of this RFA and Section D.2 above. All questions must be received no later than the Deadline for Questions/Clarifications stated in the cover letter. Responses to questions received prior to this deadline will be furnished to all prospective applicants through an amendment to the RFA.

Any information related to this RFA that is provided to a prospective applicant will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment to the RFA on condition that: a) it is required to apply and/or b) its exclusion would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicant.

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 detail in an application.

The Chief of 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 members of the SC do not have any conflicts of interest or the appearance of such with any organization 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 submitted an application for review by the SC. Members of the SC shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from any applicant.

1. **Award Administration Information**
2. **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 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.

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| **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/8c5kiKTY#ZbXxi06_JymHY5TrovKjpQ> (b) making a written request to Grants Team at grants@connection-nigeria.com, or 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>.