

Statement of Requirements for a prime contractor to promote media plurality, balance and literacy in Central Asia

1. Background

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office is looking for a prime contractor to promote media plurality, balance and literacy in Russian language media in Central Asia¹.

Russian speaking audiences outside Russia have inadequate access to good quality, impartial public service broadcasting and independent media in the Russian language. In the absence of alternatives, audiences are drawn towards news and entertainment programming lacking in balance, which makes them susceptible to disinformation campaigns.

The UK Government is already one of a number of actors supporting interventions to build greater diversity in the provision of Russian language media, especially in the Baltic States and the EU's Eastern Partnership countries. This includes projects derived from the European Endowment for Democracy's [landmark report](#) on bringing plurality and balance to Russian Language Media. These include a Russian Language News Exchange which lets independent media pool its news resources and a Baltic Centre for Media Excellence that is working to improve current standards in the region.

In the long-term, we hope that Central Asian Republics will choose to create sustainable and independent public service and commercial media platforms using traditional and digital platforms. This would create space for alternative viewpoints and build resilience to external disinformation.

2. Desired Outcome and Outputs

The desired **outcome** is to create space for alternative viewpoints and build resilience to external disinformation, by improving audiences' choice and access to reliable information in the Russian language. Use of local languages (e.g. Kazakh) will be considered also, where appropriate.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are all in scope, though priority should be given to projects aimed at the larger Russian language audiences in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Implementers are encouraged to give an assessment of whether they (or their partners) could carry out the desired project activities in each of the countries in scope, particularly where there may be restrictions on the operations of non-governmental organisations, and which they propose to focus on.

To achieve this, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is seeking a supplier to manage and deliver a project in Central Asia that could:

¹ Which we define as the five Central Asian Republics of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

1. Increase the range of sources used by domestic journalists reporting on global issues, by exploring opportunities for and barriers to access (e.g. English language)
2. Build the technical and commercial capacity of local, including grassroots, media to develop new formats for non-news programming, perhaps including drama and documentaries, that engage audiences on topical issues and/or discussion programmes that can stimulate media literacy.
3. Promote media literacy amongst journalists and citizens (e.g. young people), including those going through the education system where appropriate.

There is flexibility for bidders to propose more than one option on how and in which countries they would deliver this outcome and outputs. The authority will be looking for innovative competence based ideas linked to the above three outputs.

3. Proposal/Project scope

Interested parties are asked to provide a proposal with a full breakdown of costs The proposal will need to cover issues including:

1. A timetabled plan for the proposed activity;
2. Results orientated monitoring and evaluation plan, to define what success would look like and how it can be measured. The successful contractor will be asked to develop a detailed results framework in conjunction with the FCO / CSSF programme team.
3. The governance and reporting structure, roles and responsibilities, CVs of the proposed primary contractor project team (to include language skills) that will be deployed. Reporting mechanisms to include reporting structure/hierarchy, escalation procedures and managing risks/mitigation strategy. It should also cover legal issues (e.g. media licensing).
4. The contractor should plan to deliver the project independently so items such as office space, translation costs, security, legal fees, insurance, transport and accommodation costs should be included.
5. A list of daily rates “dayworks” remuneration chargeable fees for each of the project team members to enable the client (FCO) to commission additional project activities based on these agreed rates. Data protection and handling and human rights compliance.
6. Due diligence of potential partners: the prime contractor will undertake their own due diligence to ensure that only entities committed to good working practices and high ethical standards are engaged.
7. Risk management.

Bids from consortiums are welcome, provided that the prime contractor is a core member of the CSSF Framework.

4. Competencies

The prime contractor will ideally possess:

- a) Working knowledge and proven positive track record of work in Central Asia; Knowledge of media production and acquisition processes; Knowledge of the legal frameworks and regulatory regimes in place;
- b) Experience of qualitative and quantitative research;
- c) Extensive programme and project experience;
- d) Ability to provide and manage a range of activities e.g. training programmes and workshops.
- e) Access to commercial knowledge of independent television, quality newspapers and digital platforms;
- f) A good understanding of issues around media credibility and ethical reporting.
- g) Processes and judgement in identifying, managing, mitigating and escalating risks.

Any intellectual property rights which arise in the course of the implementation of the Project by the contractor shall belong to the successful contractor provided that the contractor grants the Authority a worldwide, perpetual, royalty free licence to use such intellectual property rights for any purpose directly connected with the Project, or with follow-up projects.

5. Dependencies

The supplier is asked to assume that they will deliver an entirely independent intervention should they win the competition. Items such as office space, translation costs, security, legal fees, insurance, transport and accommodation costs should be priced into the contract.

British Embassies may fund other media projects in individual Central Asia Republics. Where relevant, the prime contractor will be asked to liaise with these contractors to try and achieve complementarity and avoid duplication.

6. Reporting and M and E

The supplier should expect to meet the Programme Managers monthly (or more often as needed) . The assumption is that the majority of meetings will be in-country with the relevant British Embassies. The project will report to a Board consisting of a representative from the supplier and four FCO representatives. The supplier will need to report on progress against their project plan, risks and impact.

We require quarterly written narrative, results and financial reporting, alongside ad hoc meetings with UK Government staff. A lessons identified / learnt document is needed every six months. A project completion / handover report will be needed at the end of the contract.

7. Financial Management and Payments

The supplier will be reimbursed as per the CSSF Framework contract on a call-down basis following the submission of monthly line by line fee and expense reports.

8. Budget

There is up to £500,000 of CSSF funding available until March 2017, a further £500,000 is available from April 2017 to March 2018. There may be potential for follow-on funding if the project is extended.

9. Timeframe

The project is expected to start in October / November 2016 and to be completed by April 2018. There will be a single contract for the duration, with a performance related break clause.

10. Duty of Care

The FCO has no specific knowledge of any direct threat to the implementers of this project. The implementer will hold the duty of care responsibility for its staff and the security of the project; it is to ensure that all reasonable security measures (physical, information and communication) are taken to reduce the threat to as low as is reasonably possible, and to expose any risks that are identified. The project, as with the rest of the FCO's Russian Language Strategic Communication Programme is overt. No attempt should be made to disguise activity. The project board will approve an outline engagement/communication plan for the project during mutually agreed stages which be discussed at implementation phase.