

**USAID Civil Society and Media Activity
Youth Leadership Challenge Fund
Call for Applications**

The Civil Society and Media (CSM) Activity is a five-year program (2022-2027) funded by USAID through the CSM-STAND-LWA, with The Asia Foundation as the lead implementer in Nepal. USAID CSM supports independent civil society and media led by and for women, youth, and marginalized communities to advance public interest, fundamental freedoms, and accountability. Most activities will focus on Lumbini and Madhesh Provinces, with some implemented in Kathmandu. Qualified civil society organizations (CSOs) from Madhesh and Lumbini provinces are invited to submit applications for the **Youth Leadership Challenge Fund**.

Submission Deadline: September 5, 2023

Youth Leadership Challenge Fund

The category and term ‘youth’ has been debated since its definition varies. As per UNDP, youth is defined as a population between the ages of 15 and 24. While the National Youth Council Act of 2015 in Nepal defines youth as a population between the ages of 16-40 which is considered the official definition of youth in Nepal. Based on this definition, youth comprise almost 40 percent of the total population of Nepal. In Madhesh and Lumbini provinces, the youth population is 40.8 and 40.65 percent of the respective province population as per the National Population and Housing Census 2021.

Nepalese youth have a long history of participating in the civic movement in different forms be it through student politics or other different forms of activism. Nepal witnessed several youth-led movements and activism through youth-led initiatives in the 2000s. However, this has declined since 2015 with reasons attributed to the political coopting of youth leaders, political instability, high brain drains, and lack of support systems for the youth. Approximately 4% of youth in Madhesh and 4.4% in Lumbini have migrated abroad. In Madhesh and Lumbini provinces, the youth are facing challenges such as involvement in drug abuse, unemployment, gender disparities, and caste discrimination with no avenues to seek support to tackle these issues. With the ability to rally behind and raise a collective voice and action to address pressing social issues, spearhead positive change, demand accountability and drive towards democratic governance, the lack of an active and engaged youth population hinders the democratic process of a country. This highlights the need for youth-led civic movements which allow youth to channel their energy, creativity, and passion into constructive movements.

In this context, the Youth Leadership Challenge Fund aims to advance the public interest of women, youth and marginalized (WYM) by creating and enabling youth civic leaders in Madhesh and Lumbini. This will be achieved through different means of engagement with the objective of capacitating a new generation of civic leaders, establishing an inclusive and active civic space, and instilling democratic values and practices in them. By informing a new generation about civic activism, this challenge fund aims to create a fresh wave of civic activism starting at the local level and include themes to prioritize leaders from intersectional groups. The youth civic leaders are

expected to address the social and development issues through collaboration with concerned stakeholders.

1. Objectives of the Challenge Fund

The main objectives of this challenge fund are:

- To develop a new generation of youth civic actors who are capable of actively participating in democratic governance and decision-making.
- To advance the public interest in social change and community development activities through youth-led initiatives in Madhesh and Lumbini provinces; and
- To enhance local civic space and movements in Madhesh and Lumbini by strengthening the capacity of young people.

Theme of the Public Acceleration Challenge Fund

The challenge fund can prioritize working on any relevant themes with respect to the three objectives listed in this document. Some of the illustrative themes are listed below:

- Youth in facilitating policy for WYM.
- Youth network on issues of WYM.
- Youth in local governance.
- Youth in social change and addressing social issues.
- Youth in digital space.
- Any creative ideas on a theme relevant to the three main objectives of this challenge fund.

The applicant can select among the themes mentioned above or can propose youth leadership based themes which need to be within the objective of the challenge fund.

2. Funding Source Information

USAID Nepal funds the Challenge Fund through the Civil Society and Media - Strengthened Together and Advancing in New Directions (CSM-STAND) Leaders with Associates (LWA) Award. Challenge Fund opportunities complement the Government of Nepal's (GON) efforts and private sector innovations that strengthen inclusive governance and democratic principles.

3. Award Information

3.1. Estimated Funding Level. Applicants can apply for grants up to USD 40,000 not exceeding (NPR 5,284,000). The Asia Foundation has no preference for funding level, and applications will be evaluated on the merit of the program with no prejudice to the levels of funding sought.

3.2. Award Implementation Period. The grant implementation period should not exceed twelve months. The implementation period is to be driven by the logic of the program and no other consideration.

3.3. Award Type. All awards under this Call for Applications will be cost-reimbursable grants.

4. Eligibility Information

- Youth-led organizations working in and registered in Madhesh and Lumbini are encouraged to apply.
- Youth-driven organizations working in leadership, advocacy, and engagement of youths are highly encouraged to apply.
- Organizations led by women, youth and marginalized communities will be prioritized.

Please follow the instructions below carefully. Applications that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to furnish or comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

5. Content and Form of Application Submission

- The concept note should clearly highlight the specific activities.
- Applications can be submitted in English or Nepali.
- All budgets should be in local currency.
- All pages should be numbered.
- All documents should be formatted to A4 paper.

Applicants are **encouraged (not mandatory for the first submission)** to secure authoritative alphanumeric 12 digits Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number created in SAM.GOV. Since securing UEI can take around a week, applicants are encouraged to apply for a UEI number by registering under <https://sam.gov/content/home> before applying.

Application Process:

Please follow the following process while applying for the Challenge Fund.

Step 1: Email challengefund.np@asiafoundation.org requesting the concept note and budget templates with the subject line mentioning “**Youth Leadership Challenge Fund**”.

Step 2: Submission of Application: Interested applicants must email the following while applying the application deadline:

- a. Concept Note:** Submit a concept note using the template provided in Annex 1. The concept note should include the overall activities cycle, clearly highlighting the thematic focus area and other components as mentioned in the template. The concept note can be submitted in the Nepali language as well.
- b. Budget Estimate:** Submit the budget using the template available in Annex 2. The instructions for the budget proposal are mentioned in the budget template.
- c. Other Documents:** Along with the concept note and budget, applicants are required to submit the following:

- The organization's registration certificate
- Organization's Statute
- Copy of the audit report, if applicable
- List of organization's board members and staff

Pre-bid Information Session

For more information, a virtual pre-bid session will be held on **August 29, 2023**. Interested organizations can register for the pre-bid session here: <https://forms.office.com/r/5ZmWRtPAMc> or send an email requesting a pre-bid session at challengefund.np@asiafoundation.org before **5:00 PM NST on August 28, 2023**. Only registered organizations will have access to the meeting link.

Funding Restrictions

The Challenge Fund cannot be used for the following:

- **Construction:** This award does not allow for construction activities or costs.
- **Pre-award Costs:** Pre-award costs are not an allowable expense for this funding opportunity.
- **Program Activities:** Activities that are not typically funded include, but are not limited to:
 - profit-generating projects;
 - scholarships to support educational opportunities or study for individuals;
 - paying to complete activities begun with other funds;
 - financial support for fundraising or fund development projects;
 - projects that are inherently political in nature or that contain the appearance of partisanship/support to an individual or single party;
 - political party and lobbying activities;
 - projects that support specific religious activities; and,
 - microloans/microfinance projects, distribution of seed money for enterprises, and legal/land rights-focused programs.

Submission Date and Time

All applications shall be received no later than **September 5, 2023**. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered eligible.

All applications are encouraged to be submitted electronically to the following email address: challengefund.np@asiafoundation.org with the subject line mentioning "**Youth Leadership Challenge Fund**". The time stamp provided by the email service provider will be used to determine whether an application was submitted on time.

The issuance of this Call for Applications does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of the Foundation, nor does it commit the Foundation to pay for costs incurred in preparing and submitting an application.

The Foundation reserves the right to fund any or to make no awards as a result of this call if no application meets the objectives and criteria stated in this call.

6. Application Review Information

6.1. Selection Criteria:

Each application submitted will go through an evaluation process. Selected applications from the initial screening will be evaluated and rated by an independent Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) based on an evaluation matrix detailed below. The criteria outlined in the matrix are designed to assess the quality of the concept note and to determine the likelihood of its success. Applications will be reviewed based on their innovative approach, coherence, viability, clarity, and attention to detail.

6.1.1. Concept Note Evaluation Matrix:

Criteria	Explanation	Points
Quality of project idea and project planning	This relates to clarity of the problem statement considering the issues of women, youth, and marginalized (WYM) groups; innovativeness, geographical coverage, and alignment of the project idea/s with the broader objectives of the challenge fund.	40
Inclusivity	This relates to the inclusivity of the approach in the proposed activities.	20
Ability to achieve the project objective	This relates to how well the goals, objectives, activities, outputs, and outcomes are articulated and linked to the stated problems related to WYM issues and the project's viability.	20
Institution's track record and organizational capacity	This relates to the qualifications of the personnel deputed to oversee the project, the organization's capacity statement, the inclusivity of the team, the track record and capacity of its partner/s.	10
Value for money	This relates to the plan to deliver value, project costing, cost-effectiveness, personnel inputs, etc.	10

6.2. Review and Selection Process

- Submitted concept notes will be reviewed based on the submitted documents mentioned above and screened for eligibility and alignment with the objective/s of the Challenge Fund. Eligible concept notes will be forwarded to the TEP.
- Based on the Evaluation Matrix, the TEP will evaluate and rank the shortlisted concept notes.
- Once the refined concept notes and budget proposals are received, full-scale due diligence and budget negotiations will be conducted with shortlisted applicants. If the due diligence and budget negotiations are successful, the refined concept note, and the budget proposal shall be submitted for final approval.
- All applicants will be sent a written response on the outcome of their application.

6.2.1. Timeline

Activity	Deadline
Pre-bid Information session	August 29, 2023
Submission of the application package (concept note, budget, and organization documents)	September 5, 2023
Application Review and Awarding Grants Timeline	Approx. 1.5-2 months

Selected organizations shall be responsible for complying with the Government of Nepal’s requirements regarding the payment of taxes.

7. Branding and Marking

Organizations successfully selected to receive the Challenge Fund shall comply with the Branding and Marking Requirements of USAID for all activities, communication materials, and knowledge products produced under the fund as indicated in the approved Branding and Marking Plan for the USAID Civil Society and Media Activity.

Annexes

Annex 1: Concept Note Template

Annex 2: Budget Template

[Note: these annexes will be sent to interested applications once an email expressing interest to apply is received. Emails are to be sent to challengefund.np@asiafoundation.org with the subject line mentioning “**Youth Leadership Challenge Fund**”.