



SAMS

Call for Proposals in Professional Diploma Curriculum Design, Development, and Delivery

Advanced Quality Learning Initiatives for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Northern Syria (ENI/2020/416-568)

Extended Deadline for Applications: 1700 Hours, US Eastern Time, 30 May 2023

Call for Proposals Number: AQL-23-01

Background

The Syrian American Medical Society Foundation (SAMS) is a nonprofit, non-partisan, non-religious medical relief organization, with a mission to provide lifesaving healthcare services and to revitalize health systems for underprivileged refugees, internally displaced persons, and vulnerable host community members in zones of conflict and displacement. This includes implementation of essential services that emphasize priority needs, such as the delivery of medical education, training, and financial support to healthcare workers in northern Syria and surrounding countries. It also includes implementation of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programming, which has become a growing priority in recent years, and even more so following the earthquake disaster.

In northern Syria – the majority of which falls outside the control of the Government of Syria and hosts millions of displaced and conflict-affected communities – mental health needs are particularly acute, resulting from years of grief and trauma amid violence and insecurity, poor living conditions, and inadequate opportunities for social and intellectual stimulation. As with other populations affected by collective violence and displacement, the most prevalent and clinically significant mental problems within Syria are symptoms of emotional distress related to depression, prolonged grief disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder and various forms of anxiety disorders. Despite the immense need for mental health support, the current healthcare system in Syria is ill-equipped to provide it. Even before the conflict, mental health was a nascent sector with limited opportunities for education. MHPSS services are almost exclusively driven by the NGO sector, with very limited private services available. ([Levante International Development, 2022](#)).

Specific to education and capacity building of the MHPSS workforce in the area, there are few local programs available to train new mental health providers and none that offer advanced academic education so that providers can become equipped to support individuals with severe or

complex disorders. Of particular relevance to this Call for Proposals, there are no Psychiatric Nursing programs in the whole of Syria, and no Clinical Psychology or Psychotherapy programs in northern Syria. While training programs exist in psychosocial support, most are ad hoc initiatives with no standard curriculum in place - particularly in northeast Syria where mental health training is particularly scarce.

Barriers to accessing education initiatives are also considerable among conflict-affected persons in northern Syria. Students face challenges to staying enrolled and graduating, due to economic insecurity, limited time due to work pressures and household responsibilities, distance to training facilities, limited access to technology, and physical access constraints due to conflict.

Program Scope

In 2022, with funding from the European Union, SAMS embarked upon a multi-year program to deliver *Advanced Quality Learning Initiatives in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Northern Syria*. **The overall objective is to achieve improved access to inclusive, comprehensive, and integrated quality MHPSS services for populations in need in northern Syria. The specific objective of the action will be increased availability of specialized MHPSS personnel in northern Syria, including both graduates and trainers.**

During the project's inception phase, SAMS commissioned a mixed methods scoping study on the MHPSS workforce and education system in Syria to guide future programming, and organized workshops with key MHPSS stakeholders in Syria to discuss findings from these reports. Based on these activities, SAMS is planning to develop and deliver the following masters and professional diploma programs to students in northern Syria between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2025, contingent on approval of a no-cost extension by the European Union:

- Master's Degree Program in Clinical Psychology (approximately 5 students)
- Master's Degree Program in Psychiatric Nursing (approximately 10 students)
- Professional Diploma in Psychotherapy (approximately 35 students)
- Professional Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing (approximately 35 students)
- Professional Diploma in Psychosocial Support (approximately 35 students)

Through this Call for Proposals, SAMS is looking for entities and/or individuals to develop only the professional diploma programs in northern Syria. The entities/individuals selected to develop these programs will also provide technical support for delivery of such programs, in coordination with SAMS and other key stakeholders - primarily pre-vetted Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) based in Northern Syria. To promote engagement with the courses and peer-to-peer support, these Syria-based Higher Education Institutions will provide opportunities for students to meet on campus and use the university classrooms and equipment to join the courses. Further, SAMS will coordinate with local health facilities to provide practicum sites for students and graduates.

Terms of Reference (TORs) for each of the three professional diploma programs are detailed below and expected to guide the scope of applications. As shown, the sub-grantee's responsibilities will primarily focus on the academic components of the programs, including development of the course content, student entry requirements, practicum design and implementation, and instructor selection and oversight. The sub-grantee should also explore ways in which they can contribute to capacity building of the Syria-based Higher Education Institutions.

In parallel, the Syria-based Higher Education Institutions will be responsible for administrative duties such as enrolling and communicating with students; securing accreditation and approvals from local authorities; facilitating classroom space, equipment and on-campus services; and proctoring exams. SAMS will be responsible for overall management of the initiative, including communications with the donor, reporting and compliance, monitoring and evaluation, procurement, budgeting, and financial transactions.

Delivery of the two masters degree programs in Clinical Psychology and Psychiatric Nursing is considered outside the scope of this Call for Proposals, though SAMS welcomes inquiries from academic institutions about delivery of such programs. Terms of References for each of these masters degree programs can be shared separately, upon request.

Location

Due to movement restrictions that prevent Syrian students from leaving the country, all professional diploma program/s will need to be offered as fully remote (online) or hybrid (combination of remote and in-person) learning programs for students. Students are anticipated to reside in non-Government of Syria controlled areas of northern Syria - specifically, parts of Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and Al-Hassakeh Governorates. The pre-vetted Higher Education Institutions will be based in two of these governorates. Applicants are not required to travel to any of these locations, though ability and willingness to access these locations is considered beneficial.

Available Funding

There is no minimum or maximum budget ceiling per award, though value for money will be among the criteria considered when reviewing and evaluating proposals. SAMS intends to issue one or more subgrants, depending on the scope and quality of applications received. SAMS reserves the right to negotiate directly with applicants, and to solicit applications outside of this open Call for Proposals in case no applications of sufficient relevance and quality are received by the deadline.

Applicant Eligibility

This Call for Proposals is open to both legal entities and individuals.

To be considered eligible, applicants should be:

- An accredited academic institution, legally registered in their country of origin or a natural person; AND
- Parameter-compliant vis-à-vis all legal and political red lines of the European Union, specifically including relevant US and EU money laundering, fraud, terrorism financing and sanctions lists (EU restrictive measures, OFAC, etc.); AND
- Devoid of significant political and/or economic links or direct connections with the Government of Syria that would otherwise allow benefits be accrued by the Government of Syria and/or being classified as a terrorist organization

Applications representing a group of two or more entities and/or individuals will be considered. However, SAMS expects to contract with each applicant directly, as part of efforts to ensure sufficient oversight of donor funds. Additional information of relevance is included in the ‘Contracting and Payment Modalities’ section below.

Eligible applicants, both individuals and entities, will be directly responsible for implementing activities and will not act as an intermediary.

Program Description

SAMS will consider applications that respond to one or more Terms of References described below. As further outlined in ‘Application Review Information’ below, applications that focus on development and delivery of multiple academic programs (as opposed to one) are encouraged, in order to maximize synergies across the initiative. At the same time, SAMS is dedicated to obtaining the best quality program for each cadre and reserves the right to select either single-program applicants or individual programs from within multiple-program proposals.

Indicative Timeline for Delivery of Activities

Description	Deadline
Issue Call for Proposals	2 May 2023
Submission deadline for all applications	30 May 2023
Complete evaluation of applicant materials	10 June 2023
Complete negotiations with SAMS, sign partnership agreement, and designate a project coordinator who will work with SAMS to produce an implementation plan.	30 June 2023
Submit the following package for review by SAMS: detailed implementation plan: suggested student selection criteria; scope of work for instructors for each course; timeline for curriculum delivery; procedures for remote practicum supervision; and outlines of curricula for SAMS to share with Syria-based HEIs and relevant local authorities for approval.	15 July 2023
Review and select students for enrollment, in coordination with SAMS and Syria-based Higher Education Institutions.	30 August 2023

Finalize selection of instructors, in coordination with SAMS and Syria-based Higher Education Institutions.	30 August 2023
Finalize course syllabi, in coordination with instructors	30 September 2023
Provide remote supervision for practicum students	TBD
Graduate students from programs	TBD (no later than August 2025)

TOR 1. Terms of Reference for Professional Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing

Purpose and Specifications: SAMS is looking to contract an individual, team of individuals, or entity that can lead development and implementation of a Professional Diploma program in Psychiatric or Mental Health Nursing. The program duration should be 1 year and begin in September 2023. The main tasks include:

- Developing a detailed Psychiatric Nursing curriculum that will be submitted for review by SAMS and the donor
- Developing selection criteria for prospective students, together with SAMS and Syria-based Higher Education institutions, taking into consideration the pool of available candidates in northern Syria and their backgrounds
- Working with SAMS and the Syria-based Higher Education Institutions to create an implementation plan with program timelines and relevant milestones
- Communicating with SAMS, the Syria-based Higher Education Institutions, and prospective students to decide on a part-time or full-time schedule. The scoping study suggested that a part-time schedule may be more feasible due to students' needs for balancing work and study, though this should be confirmed.
- Identifying relevant and up-to-date course materials and references that can be easily accessed by the students
- Developing criteria for a practicum, including supervision specifications
- Providing remote supervision for the practicum or identifying a specialist who can supervise, and communicating with local field supervisors about student requirements
- Identifying qualified instructors for each of the courses, in coordination with SAMS and Syria-based Higher Education Institutions. Due to the lack of local psychiatrists and mental health nurses in northern Syria, many of these instructors may need to be external to Syria and provide remote instruction. Instructors must be fluent in Arabic, and the language of instruction should be Arabic.
- Identifying and organizing support services for students, such as tutoring, counseling, and career services
- Contributing to capacity building of the Syria-based Higher Education Institution and exploring ways to sustain the diploma program beyond the grant period

- Ensuring that the program follows established standards in Psychiatric Nursing and provides the level of training needed to avoid harm
- Ensuring that the curriculum is contextually and culturally relevant for students in Syria with emphasis on supporting severe or complex mental health conditions, such as complex PTSD, clinical depression, suicidality, bipolar disorder, and psychotic disorders.
- Ensuring that the curriculum includes instruction on self-care and soft skills such as good communication skills, workload management, and person-centered care.

As noted elsewhere in this Call for Proposals, this program will be offered through two pre-vetted, Syria-based higher education institutions - one located in northwest Syria, and a second located in northeast Syria. The sub-grantee is expected to communicate regularly with SAMS and these higher education institutes regarding implementation.

Required Qualifications of Key Personnel

Knowledge, skills, and experience:

- Advanced degree(s) in Psychiatric or Mental Health Nursing or medical degree with completed residency in Psychiatry
- Minimum 5 years of experience teaching AND practicing mental health nursing
- Experience overseeing an academic program in Psychiatric or Mental Health Nursing
- Knowledge of professional ethics, standards, and up-to-date practices in the field
- Research publications in a relevant area is desirable
- Fluency in English and Arabic

Competencies:

- Highly organized; able to plan, implement and monitor work with attention to detail
- Tolerance for operating in an environment characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity
- Ability to take initiative within clearly defined parameters
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Adherence to agreed-upon deadlines and SAMS protection policies

TOR 2. Terms of Reference for Professional Diploma in Psychotherapy

Purpose and Specifications: SAMS is looking for an individual, team of individuals, or entity specialized in Clinical Psychologist that can lead development and implementation of a Professional Diploma program in Psychotherapy. The program duration should be 2 years and begin in September 2023. The main tasks include:

- Developing a detailed Psychotherapy curriculum that will be submitted for review and approval by SAMS and the donor
- Developing selection criteria for prospective students, together with SAMS and Syria-based Higher Education Institutions, taking into consideration the pool of available candidates in northern Syria and their backgrounds
- Working with SAMS and the Syria-based Higher Education Institutions to create an implementation plan with program timelines and relevant milestones
- Communicating with SAMS, the Syria-based Higher Education Institutions, and prospective students to decide on a part-time or full-time schedule. The scoping study

suggested that a part-time schedule may be more feasible due to students' needs for balancing work and study, though this should be confirmed

- Identifying relevant and up-to-date course materials and references that can be easily accessed by the students
- Developing detailed guidelines for a practicum, including number and categories of direct and indirect hours and supervision specifications
- Providing remote supervision for the practicum or identifying a specialist who can supervise, and communicating with local field supervisors about student requirements
- Identifying qualified instructors for each of the courses, in coordination with SAMS and Syria-based Higher Education Institutions. Due to the lack of local mental health providers in northern Syria, most of these instructors will need to be external to Syria and provide remote instruction. Instructors must be fluent in Arabic, and the language of instruction should be Arabic.
- Identifying and organizing support services for students, such as tutoring, counseling, and career services
- Contributing to capacity building of the Syria-based Higher Education Institution and exploring ways to sustain the diploma program beyond the grant period
- Ensuring that the program follows established standards in Psychotherapy and provides the level of rigorous training needed to avoid harm
- Ensuring that the curriculum is contextually and culturally relevant for students in Syria with emphasis on treating concerns most common in this region such as complex trauma, displacement, disaster mental health, clinical depression, suicidality, and psychotic disorders.
- Ensuring that the curriculum includes instruction on self-care and soft skills such as good communication skills, workload management, and person-centered care.

As noted elsewhere in this Call for Proposals, this program will be offered through two pre-vetted, Syria-based higher education institutions - one located in northwest Syria, and a second located in northeast Syria. The sub-grantee coordinator is expected to communicate regularly with SAMS and these higher education institutes regarding implementation.

Required Qualifications of Key Personnel

Knowledge, skills, and experience:

- Advanced degree(s) in Clinical Psychology or Clinical Mental Health Counseling with at least one team member holding a PhD or PsyD in Clinical Psychology
- Minimum 5 years of experience teaching AND practicing psychotherapy
- Experience overseeing an academic program in Clinical Psychology or Psychotherapy
- Knowledge of professional ethics, standards, and up-to-date practices in the field
- Research publications in a relevant area is desirable
- Fluency in English and Arabic

Competencies:

- Highly organized; able to plan, implement and monitor work with attention to detail
- Tolerance for operating in an environment characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity
- Ability to take initiative within clearly defined parameters

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Adherence to agreed-upon deadlines and SAMS protection policies

TOR 3. Terms of Reference for Professional Diploma in Psychosocial Support

Purpose and Specifications: SAMS is looking for an individual, team of individuals, or entity with specialization in MHPSS that can lead development and implementation of a Professional Diploma program in Psychosocial Support, which will be offered to students in Northeast Syria. The program duration should be 1 year and begin in September 2023. The main tasks include:

- Reviewing the Psychosocial Support curriculum guide, student selection criteria, and practicum criteria developed by SAMS and submitting it to local authorities for approval
- Working with SAMS and Syria-based Higher Education Institutions to create an implementation plan with program timelines and relevant milestones
- Communicating with SAMS, the Syria-based Higher Education Institutions, and prospective students to decide on a part-time or full-time schedule. The scoping study suggested that a part-time schedule may be more feasible due to students' needs for balancing work and study, though this should be confirmed
- Identifying relevant and up-to-date course materials and references that can be easily accessed by the students
- Identifying qualified instructors for each course, in coordination with SAMS and Syria-based Higher Education Institutions. Due to the lack of MHPSS officers in Northeast Syria, some instructors may need to be external to Syria and provide remote instruction. Instructors must be fluent in Arabic, and the language of instruction must be Arabic.
- Identifying and organizing support services for students, such as tutoring, counseling, and career services
- Contributing to capacity building of the Syria-based Higher Education Institution and exploring ways to sustain the diploma program beyond the grant period
- Ensuring that the lesson plans are contextually and culturally relevant for students in Syria with emphasis on issues related to displacement, disaster mental health, community-based support, gender-based violence, child protection, and basic counseling
- Ensuring that the curriculum includes instruction on self-care and soft skills such as good communication skills, workload management, and person-centered care.

As noted elsewhere in this Call for Proposals, this program will be offered through two pre-vetted, Syria-based higher education institutions - one located in northwest Syria, and a second located in northeast Syria. The sub-grantee coordinator is expected to communicate regularly with SAMS and these higher education institutes regarding implementation.

Required Qualifications of Key Personnel

Knowledge, skills, and experience:

- Advanced degree(s) in a mental health field
- At least 5 years of experience working in MHPSS
- Previous experience designing and/or conducting MHPSS trainings
- Fluency in English and Arabic

Competencies:

- Highly organized; able to plan, implement and monitor work with attention to detail
- Tolerance for operating in an environment characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity
- Ability to take initiative within clearly defined parameters
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Adherence to agreed-upon deadlines and SAMS protection policies

Application and Submission Instructions

Required Documents

The following documents must be submitted for an application to be considered complete:

- Proof of Registration as an Accredited Higher Education Institution (entities only)
- Technical Proposal Narrative (see attached template)
- Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative (see attached template)
- CVs of Key Personnel (no template provided)

All of the above documents should be submitted in the English language. Additional annexes may be submitted, where appropriate.

Additional documents related to due diligence (core policies and procedures for entities, information for SAMS to conduct anti-terrorism screenings, etc.) will be requested from shortlisted applicants.

Submission Instructions

Please email application packages to HQprograms@sams-usa.net no later than 1700 Hours, Eastern Daylight Savings Time on **30 May 2023**. The subject of the email should be as follows:

‘Applicant Name, Program Title, [AQL-23-01]’

All applications received prior to the deadline will receive an email confirming receipt. Receipt of this email does not constitute any funding commitment by SAMS.

Please see attached annexes for application templates.

Cost Sharing

Cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not a requirement. Though looked upon favorably, its inclusion will not result in a competitive ranking increase when evaluated.

Application Review Information

Application Review Panel

SAMS will assemble a panel of SAMS staff with expertise in the following areas: Grants, Compliance, Medical Education, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, and Finance. Committee members will review all applications individually, submitting scoring to a

Committee Chair, who will then consolidate feedback and convene a remote meeting to discuss selection. A donor representative will be invited to the selection meeting as an observer.

Evaluation Criteria

Applicants will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- 1) Technical capacity and qualifications
- 2) Previous experience leading an academic program
- 3) Quality and comprehensiveness of the proposed approach
- 4) Cost-effectiveness
- 5) Risk mitigation strategies

Indicative Application Review Timeline

- 1 June 2023: Evaluation committee meeting to select applications
- 5-15 June 2023: Interviews and negotiations with finalists
- 15-30 June 2023: Contracts issued and signed

Contracting and Payment Modalities

SAMS anticipates entering into sub-grant agreements, which will flow down any and all applicable Special and General Conditions that are included in the grant agreement between SAMS and the European Union, along with various specific conditions imposed by SAMS related to coordination with project stakeholders, as well as ethics (conflict of interest, safeguarding, fraud, anti-bribery, corruption, etc.)

Reimbursement payments, to be issued on a quarterly basis, will be issued promptly upon review and approval of all required interim and financial technical and financial reporting and supporting documentation. Advance payments (typically up to 30% of the total sub-grant budget) will be considered upon request, contingent on SAMS' due diligence assessment of the sub-grantee and submission of a detailed spending forecast.

Informational Queries

Applicants with technical questions related to this Call for Proposals should contact HQPrograms@sams-usa.net. SAMS will also convene a virtual Q&A session with potential applicants via Zoom on **15 May 2023**, and will be available to participate in additional virtual Q&A sessions upon request of applicants. Please note that statements made by representatives from SAMS during virtual meetings and/or email responses to technical questions from SAMS do not indicate a commitment to fund the program discussed.

Disclaimer

This Call for Proposals does not constitute any commitment of funding from SAMS or the European Union. Final selection of applicants is contingent on approval from the European Union.