

Questions asked during CARSI Grant Facebook Chat on April 4, 2016

Link to FB chat: <https://www.facebook.com/panamaestamosunidos/posts/10153999885644648>

Q:

- **When is your decision date?**
- **How do we account for measuring change in crime rates when the project proposal only covers two years?**
- **If there are statistics on crime rates including gang involvement, where can we find them? What agencies keep record of crime involvement in youth?**
- **If we are selected as a grantee, how does the U.S. Embassy plan to measure/evaluate our project?**
- **What are PMP indicators?**
- **What do we do if there is no true "baseline" data for parts of our project? (Our organization has been in Panama for six years, but we did not begin collecting data until much later).**
- **Aside from an introduction of the organization, description of the project objectives, and a needs statement, what else do you like to see in our proposal narrative?**

A:

- On indicators and baselines, it really depends on your program. In our Notice of Funding Opportunity (pages 7 and 8), we put out a couple of examples, of what indicators might look like, but each proposal should have project-specific "SMART" goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. There are a number of ways to get baseline data: it could be publicly available data, pre-project surveys, etc. Applicants should design their own baselines and indicators that make sense for the particular program.
- Part of the application and selection process is coming to an agreement on appropriate baselines, indicators, and outcomes. Successful applications will have SMART indicators as part of the submission, and it's those that we will use to measure performance.
- On the proposal narrative, please refer to the NOFO for specific information. However, in general, a proposal narrative should be a clear and detailed description of what your project is, what steps and activities it will undertake, and what results you expect from those activities. The clearer and more logical your proposal narrative, the easier it will be to understand the goals of the project and evaluate the proposal.

Q: Our organization is US based 501 c3 with experience in vocational training in the USA and Central America. Is there a specific preference regarding project location i.e Panama City, Colon?

A:

- We will accept projects that conform to the objectives outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity regardless of geographic focus. Objective Three notes a particular focus on Panama City and Colon; however, there are many viable focus areas for projects.

Q:

In addition to the questions asked by the previous participant related to PMP indicators and the timeframe in which the proposal will be accepted or not, are there any priority geographic areas for the execution of the project which should be considered when preparing the proposal? Thanks.

A:

- We are soliciting responses throughout the entire country. One objective we seek addressed in our Notice of Funding Opportunity is "Opportunities for Youth and Marginalized Communities". In previous years, we've seen successful applications focusing on both urban areas (Panama City, Colon) and indigenous areas. On page 7, you will see we are emphasizing reaching youth in urban areas this year, but we will give full consideration to any geographic-based project.

Q: In page 7 "project expansion" you are referring to other organizations. Are you considering civil society? private sector? or which type

A:

- Thanks for your question. The "Project Expansion" section pertains to the option to expand a selected project to cover a broader sector of the country, or to other countries, subject to the availability of future funding. While not required, you may submit a brief section in your project proposal explaining how you would expand your project should more funding become available.

Q: My question has to do with the institutions that can apply. Can mental health agencies with affiliations to academic institutions apply?

A:

- Thanks for the question. If your institution qualifies under one of the following categories, we welcome your application: U.S. Nonprofit/nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, overseas-based (e.g. Panama) nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and public international organizations..

Q: How does the embassy go about auditing, monitoring and evaluating awarded programs throughout their time as recipients?

A:

- It depends project to project, but there are a few basic things we do with all of our projects. For most grants, we will do periodic site visits to see the program and progress first hand. These site visits may include discussions of both the program and the finances. We also require quarterly reporting, and generally seek an accounting of financial activity when organizations request additional disbursements. There's some good resources for the general framework at <http://www.grants.gov/.../learn-grants/grant-reporting.html>

Q: How does the embassy define public international organizations?

A:

- The www.grants.gov website provides complete information regarding eligibility which you can find here: <http://www.grants.gov/.../learn.../grant-eligibility.html>

Q: Is the embassy interested in seeing “agreement” letters? In other words, is it necessary to provide proof that the programs will be working with, for example, MEDUCA

A:

- You may submit whatever attachments you feel are needed to support your proposal, although agreement letters are not required.

Q: How long after the closing date does the embassy expect to send out either award or denial letters?

A:

- We expect to finish signing agreements with the selected grant recipients by September 30. Denial letters will go out shortly after that.

Q: Can you provide us with the names of the programs and/or agencies that have been awarded in the past?

A:

- Sure thing! The full list of Department of State grants issued in Panama is available on USASpending.gov. The process to posting data to that site sometimes takes a while, but it's a good resource to see what the United States is spending here. Note that the site has ALL grants the embassy writes, not just the grants we're hoping to fund under the Central America Regional Security Initiative - Economic Support Fund that this opportunity will use. <https://www.usaspending.gov/Pages/AdvancedSearch.aspx...>

Q: Are there any specific institutions that the embassy would like for the programs to work with?

A:

- we would encourage you to develop the local partnerships that make the most sense and are most helpful to your proposed project.

Q: Just to get an idea of the competitiveness related to this NOFO, on average, how many applications does the embassy receive?

A:

- The number of applications we receive varies from year to year.

Q: I am interested in whether there are existing inter-agency collaborations between large government-driven programming and (from the other end) police or security-driven strategies. This is where we have seen our greatest successes in the area of prevention of crime and juvenile diversion. What is a recommended source of information regarding existing efforts? We have had a good experience connecting these levels of government down to through a continuity of care model.

A:

- We agree that programs that compliment government-driven programming often have the biggest impact. In Panama, the Ministry of Public Security will have much of the information on the government's crime prevention and juvenile priorities and programs. Other useful sources may be local civil society organizations, the Ministry of Government, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of the Presidency.

Q: My second question is regarding the Oficina de Seguridad Integral (OSEGI). Is there an information source regarding this institution's current and forthcoming policies, priorities and operations, such that any project submitted to them might seamlessly fit their agenda, while offering some innovation.

A:

- Great question, and one that underscores the importance of looking at other local programs in Panama to get the greatest value out of your program. We would direct you to the individual ministries or agencies managing the projects you think might be relevant for the latest information.

Q: I'd like to revisit an earlier question on recidivism data. Is there information on the quality of corrections data, or at least a process evaluation on how that data has been tracked in the past? Is it traditionally under- or over-estimated? And is there a sense of the amount of crime un- or under-reported? One of our current problems is a disconnect with the non-recidivism rate and the crime rate. This might not be an issue there though.

A:

- The Ministry of Government in Panama manages the national corrections system. One starting point may be with international organizations, including UNODC. We'll be happy to discuss via email at PanamaGrants@state.gov. Thanks for joining us today!
<http://www.unodc.org/.../implementing-prison-reform-in...>

Q: In order to participate and execute actions in Panama our organization is interested in understanding the requirements, formats, and other elements needed to submit our proposal. We would also like to know the geographic areas you would like to focus on in this grant.

A:

- All of the information pertaining to formatting and required elements for proposals can be found in our Notice of Funding Opportunity which you can find at: www.grants.gov and by searching "Panama". There are no required geographic areas, as long as the project conforms to the objectives outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Q: Is it possible to submit a proposal if we are from El Salvador? 2. What is the minimum execution time for the project, 18 or 24 months?

A:

- Yes, you can apply for this grant. U.S. NGO's having 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, overseas-based nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and public international organizations are eligible to apply. The minimum period of performance is 18 months, and the maximum is 36 months.

Q: What is the expected role of the Ministries of Government and Public Security in the execution of the project?

- Organizations who are eligible as the prime recipient may partner with government institutions. The nature of this partnership and the government's involvement should be specified clearly in the proposal. The applicant is responsible for defining the role the partner organization will play in their project proposal.

Q: Please explain what is meant by type of applicant (Question 9 of SF424)?

- This is the organization type (i.e., U.S. Nonprofit/nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, overseas-based nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and public international organizations).

Q: ¿Is the information that appears on the upper right corner of the NOFO the "Funding Opportunity Numbers", and the title which must be placed in item number 12 of the SF424?

A:

- Yes, you should put the information in the header: NOFO Number: S-PM070-16-GR-500
Promoting Security and Accountability in Panama.

Q: How do you get the "Competition Identification Number"? Do you need to add something other than the name of the project in item 13 on the SF424?

A:

- This number should already be in the electronic submission form on grants.gov.

Q: What should we enter in "Congressional District of:" if we are not in the US?

- Please enter N/A if you are not in the United States.

8. What is the difference between the "Federal" and the "b. Applicant" in items 18a and 18b in the SF424? What should we enter in those categories?

A:

- 18a is the Federal amount (i.e., what the applicant will be asking the grant to pay for), and 18b is the cost share (i.e., what the applicant's organization will commit to paying for). Cost-share is not required, but you can include it if you are anticipating providing cost-share. Please note that you are bound to provide the cost-share amount you put in 18b.

Q: I'd like to reiterate on the feedback for past grants question, and add a question. What is the scope of the grant regarding reach? We have been working with vulnerable populations for some time, and outcomes in terms of reintegration with the formal economy are measurable, but the time/effort necessary to elicit this, is large per person. Given the grant floor and ceiling, what is the general range of clients you expect to reach?

A:

- Thank you for your question. We have intentionally not defined an anticipated reach for project proposals. We would expect that projects with higher budgetary requirements would have greater reach than smaller projects. However, we will evaluate each project on its merits in accordance with the objectives as described in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and the broader CARSI objectives.

Q: In regards to the budget, are there any specific things that should not go on the program budget?

A:

- Yes, there are a few items that should not be in the budget. As noted on page 23 of the NOFO under 'Budget Conditions and Restrictions, the Embassy does not pay for the following:
Publication of materials for distribution within the U.S.;
Administration of a project that will make a profit;
Expenses incurred before or after the specified dates of award period of performance (unless prior written approval received);
Projects designed to advocate policy views or positions of foreign governments or views of a particular political faction;
Alcoholic beverages;
Costs of entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and social activities and any associated costs are unallowable, except where specific costs that might otherwise be considered entertainment have a programmatic purpose and are authorized either in the approved budget for the Federal award or with prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency;
Land;
Construction.

Q: Our organization is interested in applying for Objective 3 sub section 1, provide vocational training to at risk youth, my question is are organizations providing this service and if so, how many youth have they trained and what is their training cost per student

A:

- Thanks for your question. It's important to look at other local programs in Panama to get the greatest value out of your program. We would direct you to the individual ministries or agencies managing the projects you think might be relevant for the latest information.

Q: Does the grant recipient change from year to year?

A:

- The applicant selected for this funding opportunity will be expected to complete the program in the 24-36 months specified in the NOFO, but we do not select the same grant recipients every year. Each application and NOFO is treated differently.

Q: Is it possible to get feedback on past applications?

A:

- Thank you for your question. Within this context we will try to avoid providing comments on specific applications; however, feel free to send an email to PanamaGrants@state.gov and we will endeavor to provide as much feedback as possible. Please note that this year's solicitation is significantly different from last year', thus previous projects may no longer fit within the target objective.