



DEPARTMENT OF STATE – U.S. Embassy Panama

Program Office: U.S. Embassy Panama

Funding Opportunity Title: Reinforcing a democratic, secure, and prosperous Panama

Announcement Type: Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: S-PM070-13-GR-501

Deadline for Applications: March 10, 2013

CFDA 19.700

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I. Executive Summary:

The U.S. Embassy in Panama is pleased to announce an open competition for grant awards through this Request for Applications (RFA) and invites nonprofit and for-profit companies to submit proposals for activities in Panama to strengthen civil society, democracy, the rule of law, government institutions, or provide opportunities for vulnerable youth in marginal communities. U.S. Embassy Panama will initially award approximately \$500,000 for these activities, contingent upon the availability of funds and quality of proposals, and anticipates funding up to three to five projects through this announcement via grants or cooperative agreements.

II. Program Objectives:

Successful grant proposals will pursue objectives that reinforce a democratic, secure, and prosperous Panama by: 1) supporting the development of civil society and democracy; 2) strengthening the rule of law and aiding the development of Panamanian government institutions; and 3) providing opportunities to underserved youth and marginalized communities. U.S. Embassy Panama encourages programs aiming to fulfill one or more of these three objectives to include the Darien region or indigenous populations wherever appropriate. Following is a more detailed description of the RFA program objectives:

1. Civil Society and Democracy:

- a. Build civil society capacity to:
 - i. Independently monitor government and quasi-government actions to increase accountability, promote transparency, and reduce corruption.
 - ii. Form public-private partnerships with the government to accomplish shared goals, harness synergies, and promote government responsiveness to civic feedback.
- b. Support election observation and monitoring, including tracking political party commitments to the Pacto Etico, training the general population on their civic responsibilities and the functioning of the electoral system, and promoting a transparent electoral process.
- c. Incorporate traditional media and social media elements as tools for sharing information, coordinating action, and promoting accountability in ways that make Panama more democratic, secure, and prosperous.
- d. Promote a free and independent press as a mechanism for advancing democracy.

2. Rule of Law & Government Institutions:

- a. Provide technical support to the public security services within the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), particularly SENAN, to enhance inter-institutional collaboration in the strategic budget process. Such collaboration is a key enabler of good long-term institutional planning for equipment, personnel, and capital investments. The U.S. Embassy will favor proposals that promote inter-institutional collaboration among Panamanian Government agencies, both within and across Ministry boundaries.

- b. Provide training and technical support to assist public security services, mainly SENAN and SENAFRONT, with the transition to the accusatory justice system (Sistema Penal Accusatorio – SPA), focusing especially on cultivating inter-institutional collaboration between public security services and other justice system actors.

3. Opportunities for Youth

- a. Provide mentoring to vulnerable youth in marginalized communities, focused on developing plans for the future, avoiding violence, and participating productively in society.
- b. Develop activities that encourage personal development and the positive use of youths' free time, for example through sports, music, or other activities.
- c. Promote education (particularly English language training) for vulnerable youth in marginalized communities in ways that provide future employment opportunities.

III. Application and Submission Information

Award Period: Variable. U.S. Embassy Panama prefers shorter periods around 12 months, but would consider award periods of up to four years for exceptional proposals on a case-by-case basis.

Award Amount: U.S. Embassy Panama expects to fund three to five proposals for a total program value not to exceed \$500,000 in U.S. Government funding, contingent upon the availability of funds. Submissions will be evaluated on the quality of the proposals but also on the capacity of the proposing organization to carry out the proposal, manage the funds received, contribute cost-sharing to a project from non-U.S. Government sources, and provide plans for possible sustainability of projects going forward after U.S. Government funding is finished and/or reduced. U.S. Embassy Panama is unlikely to fund proposals for less than \$50,000 or for more than \$300,000 in U.S. Government funding (total funding for projects can and should exceed the U.S. Government funding through cost-sharing), but could make exceptions for especially compelling proposals. The U.S. Embassy may also encourage applicants to change their requested funding level. The proposals may focus on one or more of the three objectives or any part(s) thereof. Organizations that submit applications in response to this announcement acknowledge and accept all of the requirements contained herein. This announcement serves as public notice to all interested parties to have equal opportunity to submit project proposals for funding consideration. All submissions in response to this announcement are voluntary and do not obligate the Department of State or U.S. Embassy Panama to fund any proposal or proposal preparation costs.

Application Submission Process: All applicants must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application. (See note below about possible application through grantsolutions.gov for applicants who have valid DUNS and SAM/CCR registrations.)

Registering with Grants.gov is a one-time process; however, it could take as long as two weeks to have the registration validated and confirmed. Please begin the registration

process immediately to ensure that the process is completed well in advance of the deadline for applications. Until that process is complete, you will not be issued a user password for Grants.gov, which is required for application submission. There are four steps that you must complete before you are able to register: (1) Obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (if your organization does not have one already) by calling 1-866-705-5711 or visiting www.dnb.com; (2) Register with the System for Award Management (SAM) at www.sam.gov; (3) Register yourself as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR); and (4) Be authorized as an AOR by your organization. For more information, go to www.grants.gov. Please note that your SAM or CCR registration must be annually renewed. Failure to renew your SAM or CCR registration may prohibit submission of a grant application through Grants.gov.

Several of the steps in the www.grants.gov registration process can take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this solicitation to confirm or determine their registration status with www.grants.gov.

Interested organizations using www.grants.gov for the first time should register on the www.grants.gov site to create a new applicant account as soon as possible because this process must be completed before an application can be submitted. To register with www.grants.gov, follow the “Get registered” link. Organizations that have previously used www.grants.gov do not need to register again. If an organization that has previously used www.grants.gov is not able to access the system, please contact Customer Support for help in gaining access (see contact information below).

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your Internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via www.grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through www.grants.gov.

The www.grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the www.grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the “For Applicants” section of the website. U.S. Embassy Panama strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly www.grants.gov, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the www.grants.gov system.

Please refer to www.grants.gov for definitions of various “application statuses” and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from www.grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via www.grants.gov can take up to two business days. The Department of State will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

For further information regarding application submission procedures please contact www.grants.gov customer support at 1-800-518-4726 (available 24 hours a day, 7 hours a week) or via email at support@grants.gov.

Faxed, couriered, or emailed documents will not be accepted as official submissions at any time.

Applicants must follow all formatting instructions in this document

Application Deadline: All applications must be submitted on or before March 10, 2013, 11:30 p.m. Panama time. Applications submitted after 11:30 p.m. will be automatically rejected by the www.grants.gov system and will be technically ineligible for consideration. **Begin the application process early**, as this will allow time to address any technical difficulties that may arise in advance of the deadline. There will be no exceptions to this application deadline. **Therefore, we strongly urge applicants to begin this process on www.grants.gov well in advance of the submission deadline.**

It is the responsibility of all applicants to ensure that proposals have been received by www.grants.gov in their entirety. U.S. Embassy Panama bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

Application Content: Applicants must follow the RFA instructions and conditions contained herein and supply all information required. **Failure to furnish all information or comply with stated requirements will result in disqualification from the competition.** Applicants must set forth full, accurate, and complete information as required by this RFA. The penalty for making false statements in proposals to the USG is prescribed on 18 U.S.C.1001.

Applications may not exceed five single-sided, double-spaced pages in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. This requirement excludes the allowable appendices, which are identified in Section 7 below. All documents (excepting scanned attachments, which must be in .pdf format) must be Microsoft Word or Microsoft Excel compatible, as applicable. We welcome documents in either Spanish or English, and applicants are encouraged to use whichever language allows for the best and clearest expression of their proposals. Spanish documents, however, must be accompanied by a corresponding English version (which will not count against the 5-page limit) and the English version will have legal precedence in conflicts of interpretation.

A good proposal may describe:

- Experience working in Panama and developing/implementing projects, especially as it relates to the program objectives
- Experience in improving the capacity of local community-based organizations.
- Experience in developing media content and the ability to expand messaging capabilities to wider audience – media buys/opinion polls/surveys.
- Experience working with other institutions, either civil or government, especially experience involving inter-institutional collaboration.
- Ability to conduct workshops or other events, as appropriate.
- Training outlines for proposed programs, as appropriate.

The proposal must consist of the following:

Section 1 - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424, 424a, and 424b):

This form can be found on-line at www.grants.gov.

Section 2 - Abstract:

The abstract is limited to 300 words in length. It must provide a summary of the identified need, proposed activities, and expected results.

Section 3 - Project Design:

The applicant must demonstrate that the project strategy and design are likely to achieve the proposed results; that proposed activities and timeframes are reasonable and feasible. The proposal describes in detail how project activities will be accomplished and reasonably outlines the potential for the project to have a positive impact in the program area addressed. (30 points)

Section 4 - Organization Capability:

The organization has sufficient depth of experience and talent to provide technical assistance in the proposed program as described in this announcement. The U.S. Embassy will consider the past performance of prior grant recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Applicants shall demonstrate an institutional record of successful programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements. Proposed personnel and institutional resources must be adequate, appropriate, and well qualified to achieve the project objectives. Roles and responsibilities of key staff must be provided. (20 points)

Section 5 – Ownership and Sustainability

The applicant describes how the project will be effective and contribute to improving or supporting the targeted program goal(s). Proposals will be evaluated on the reasonableness or likelihood of sustainable results that will endure beyond the term of the project and the effectiveness of project inputs. Proposals that include a strategy or plan will be evaluated on probability of local institutionalization, sustainability, reasonableness and innovation. (30 points)

Section 6 – Cost Effectiveness

Budget narrative outlining the cost effectiveness of the program and explaining how overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, are kept as low as practicable. Highlight any cost sharing or donor coordination, including with Panamanian government institutions, as appropriate. (20 points)

Section 7 - Appendices:

Proposal submissions must include two appendices, with a third, optional appendix to be submitted at the discretion of the applicant. Only the appendices listed below may be included as part of the application:

- (a) **Budget (Required)** – a line item budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; fringe benefits; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs. Any areas of funding that

are currently known to go to a sub-recipient need to be listed as such. If available and applicable (only for U.S. organizations), please include a copy of the current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA).

- (b) **Resume (Required)** – a resume, not to exceed one page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff, such as a Project Director. If an individual for this type of position has not been identified, the applicant may submit a one-page position description, identifying the qualifications and skills required for that position, in lieu of a resume.
- (c) **Letters of Intent** – if local or government partners have been identified, letters of intent should be included with the application. The letters must identify the type of relationship to be entered into (formal or informal), the roles and responsibilities of each partner in relation to the proposed project activities, and the expected result of the partnership. Please note that these are not letters of support, and should only be included for those organizations that will play an active role in the project, including those that receive financial support through the project budget. The individual letters cannot exceed one page in length, and applicants are limited to submitting up to five letters per concept paper.

IV. Award Selection Criteria:

Applicants should note that the following criteria (1) serve as a standard against which all applications will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that should be addressed in all applications. The USG will award grants to the applicant whose offer represents the best value to the USG on the basis of technical merit, organizational capacity, sustainability, and cost. The USG may negotiate with prospective grantees and request modifications to project proposals or budgets.

Each application will be evaluated by a peer review committee of U.S. Embassy Panama and other experts, as deemed appropriate. The evaluation criteria have been tailored to the requirements of this RFA.

- **Project Design (30 points):** Applicants should describe what they propose to do, how they will do it, and why it is significant. The proposed activities should exhibit substance, precision, and relevance to U.S. Embassy Panama’s goals and objectives. Applicants should include information on how they will measure activities’ effectiveness. The review panel will be viewing the implementation plan in terms of how well it addresses the problem statement, relevance of the goals and objectives, feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion, and the extent to which the impact of the project will continue beyond the conclusion of the funding period.
- **Organizational Capability (20 points):** Proposals should demonstrate the ability to develop and implement programs in one or more of the areas of Civil Society and Democracy, Rule of Law and Government Institutions, or Opportunities for Youth. Applicants must demonstrate how their resources, capabilities, and experience will enable them to achieve the stated goals and objectives. In addition, applicants should describe

how and with whom they will collaborate to meet project goals. The application must distinguish all key partners and organizations that will be involved.

- **Ownership, Innovation, and Sustainability (30 points):** Proposals should demonstrate the sustainability factor within their application and describe an appropriate plan. Proposals should focus on long-term institutional capacity-building, both within the Government of Panama and within Panamanian civil society.
- **Cost Effectiveness (20 points):** Overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as practicable. Cost sharing is encouraged.

V. Award Administration Information

Award Notices: All grant agreement shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The Grants Officer is the Government official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the Recipient through either mail or facsimile transmission. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.

Anticipated Time to Award: Following the close date of this announcement the Department of State anticipates making selection and awards on or about April 1, 2013.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the Government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. Issuance of any Federal Assistance Award as a result of this RFA is contingent upon the availability of funds. The Department of State reserves the right to award more or less funding than stated herein or make no awards as might be determined to be in the best interest of the U.S. Government.

Reporting Requirements: The grantee will be required to develop a work plan, with input from U.S. Embassy Panama, within 30 days of award notification. The requirements regarding progress reports will be determined once the award is issued.

VI. DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this RFA is authoritative and may not be modified by any Embassy representative. Explanatory information provided by the Embassy that contradicts this RFA will not be binding on the Embassy. If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State and U.S. Embassy Panama have no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Department of State and U.S. Embassy Panama.

VII. ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is limited to educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and for-profit companies.

The Department encourages organizations that have not previously received international program funding from the U.S. Government to apply under this announcement. Community non-governmental organizations are encouraged to apply. New applicants must have a demonstrated ability to develop and implement a program. A demonstrated understanding of the political, cultural, and institutional environment in Panama will be considered favorably.

PLEASE NOTE: We strongly encourage applicants to access immediately www.grants.gov as indicated in the instructions below in order to obtain a username and password. It may take up to a week to register with www.grants.gov and www.grantsolutions.gov. Please see the section entitled “APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION” for further information.

Cost Sharing or Matching

This program does not require cost sharing, and it will not be an evaluation component for proposals. However, this would affect the overall cost effectiveness of a proposal and U.S. Embassy Panama encourages organizations to identify cost sharing in their activities.

VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION

- A) For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.
- B) For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact Aaron Singleterry - SingleterryAM@state.gov

Once the RFA submission period has passed, U.S. Government officials – including those in the Department of State and at embassies/missions overseas – cannot discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process is completed.