

Questions and Answers

2020 CARSI Notice of Funding Opportunity

Strengthening Governance, Transparency and Accountability in Panamá

Funding Opportunity Number: S-M070-21-GR-501

Application Period Opens: April 20, 2021

Deadline for Applications: June 18, 2021

Deadline for Questions: May 20, 2021

Total Amount Available: \$750,000

Award Floor: \$100,000

Award Ceiling: \$750,000

Anticipated Start Date for Projects: September 30, 2021

Link Informational Session Presentation (in Spanish):

https://statedept.zoomgov.com/rec/share/ImHtMFt0cREEWwkfGNQC2ukl2_ebFM_hsloW6ZGaMnZxnH4WSMSFuauQzrpexXkb.b3juHj6GySgbmio3

Corrections

- **Applicants MUST be actively registered in SAM.gov to be eligible to apply to this funding opportunity.** During the informational session and the previous version of this document it was mistakenly stated that applicants could apply while their registration was in process. This is not accurate. Applications that do not have an active registration in SAM.gov will be considered ineligible and will not be reviewed.
- **The Project Start date for proposed projects should be September 30, 2021.** Tab D of the NOFO indicates the project start date on the SF-424, field 17, should be September 30, 2020. This is incorrect. The form should state a project start date of September 30, 2021.

Eligibility Requirements

Question 1: Can you apply for this opportunity if your registration in SAM.gov is pending?

Answer: Applicants must be actively registered in Sam.gov to be eligible to apply for this opportunity. Applications that do not have an active registration in SAM.gov will be considered ineligible and will not be reviewed.

Question 2: Can a non-profit organization apply to this funding opportunity?

Answer: Yes. All U.S. and non-U.S. NGOs/non-profit organizations may submit a proposal under this funding opportunity. However, they must be registered as NGOs in the country in which they operate and must be registered on SAM.gov.

Question 3: Must NGOs / universities be registered in Panama in order to be eligible to apply to this funding opportunity?

Answer: All U.S. and non-U.S. NGOs and universities may submit a proposal under this funding opportunity. However, they must be registered as universities and NGOs in the country in which they operate and must be registered on SAM.gov. Please note, however, while entities do not have to be registered in Panama to apply for this funding opportunity, successful proposals will have alliances with relevant Panamanian authorities and local organizations.

Question 4: We are a non-U.S./non-Panamanian based, for profit. Are we required to be a US-based/ Panama - based organization to apply for the funding opportunity?

Answer: Prospective applicants do not need to be U.S. based or based in Panama to apply for this funding opportunity. However, because the projects will be implemented in Panama, successful proposals will include an in-depth understanding of the relevant Panamanian issues and reflect partnerships with local organizations and authorities for successful project implementation.

Based on the description of your organization, for-profit organizations are not eligible to apply to this funding opportunity. We seek proposals from NGOs, academic institutions and Public International Organizations. However, eligible candidates can include as part of their project implementation, funding for technical assistance, which your organization may provide if it has the relevant technical expertise.

DUNS, NCAGE and SAM.gov Registrations

Question 1: When registering a non-profit organization in SAM.gov, should we use the individual option or the system option?

Answer: To register in SAM.gov, you must first create an individual account and then fill out the “Register New Entity” section. For more details about this process, refer to the SAM.gov: Guides for New Applicants, SAM.gov User Guide and the SAM.gov Steps and Instructions available in the Related Documents tab in Grants.gov or the U.S. Embassy in Panama website.

Question 2: What do you mean when you recommend applicants only use “the first address line” in the NCAGE/CAGE registration?

The NCAGE/CAGE electronic registration form has two lines to fill out the address of the organization. We recommend organizations only use the first line to ensure the NCAGE address matches the address in DUNS and Sam.gov.

Question 3: Are international organizations required to enter Electronic Funds Transfer banking information on Sam.gov?

International entities registering in SAM are not required to enter banking information for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) on the Financial Information page of the entity registration. Those fields are optional. An international entity may enter banking information for EFT if they use a U.S. financial institution.

Question 4: How do I know if the DUNS, NCAGE and SAM.gov registrations are already completed and correct? It is necessary to have all those registrations ready to get the approved for any grant?

Answer: You should be able to search all three websites for your organization, and if successful, there should be an "approved" message, or active status. You should have also received a confirmation email when you finished the enrollment process. It is necessary to have all the registrations ready to apply for this funding opportunity.

Engaging with Potential Partners

Question 1: Can we engage the government (e.g., Ministry of Finance) in activities under Objectives 2 and 3, as well as civil society organizations?

Answer: Absolutely. We encourage applicants to form local partnerships and alliances with the relevant Panamanian officials and local civil society organizations. Two of the elements taken into account during the evaluation of proposals are organizational capacity and sustainability, both of which are strengthened by local partnerships and project personnel in Panama. The grant will be awarded to a primary grantee, but that primary grantee can give sub-awards to other organizations, as appropriate, with the purpose of meeting project objectives. However, funding awarded through this grant program cannot be used for law enforcement or to support training for members of law enforcement.

Question 2: Is it necessary to have an MOU with a Panama government entity to apply for this grant?

Answer: No. An MOU with a Panama government entity is not necessary to apply for a CARSI grant. However, we encourage applicants to form local partnerships and alliances with the relevant Panamanian officials and local civil society organizations.

Question 3: In which cases is it essential for a project proposal, submitted by a civil service / non-government organization, to have a partnership with government institution?

Answer: There aren't any parameters established in the NOFO that define when a project requires a partnership or collaboration with a government institution. The need to have a partnership / collaboration with a government institution will depend entirely on the nature of the project. However, because the projects will be implemented in Panama, successful proposals will include partnerships and alliances with institutions necessary to carry out the proposed project successfully.

Question 4: As we look towards identifying civil society partners, do you have any recommendations for the appropriate criteria for selecting national partners?

Answer: Other than ensuring that the local partner is a legally registered organization with no legal issues regarding project and financial management, we do not have criteria for selecting local civil society partners.

Question 5: Is it feasible for one of the partners to be a private entity? So, for example a project managed by a university with a partner from the private sector providing technical assistance.

Answer: The organization that is applying for the CARSI funds needs to meet the requirements of eligible candidates, which are - "U.S. non-profit / NGOs, overseas based non-profit / NGOs, institutions of higher education and public international organizations." Only these candidates can apply for CARSI funds. Project proposals, may include technical experts, as necessary, with the purpose of meeting project objectives.

Application Instructions

Question 1: What format must be used in the proposal?

Answer: The NOFO includes the technical format requirements and explains which documents and sections must be included in the proposal submission. Applicants can decide how to format their proposals, as long as they meet the technical formatting and content parameters established by the NOFO. The template that we provide in the Supporting Documents is a guide

that applicants can use to develop their proposal. It incorporates most of the requirements set out in the NOFO along with several other areas that are considered in the evaluation of applications. However, the use of the template, as a whole or in part, is completely optional.

Question 2: What does “Anticipated Start Date for Projects” mean?

Answer: We anticipate that the projects funded through this NOFO will be starting on September 30, 2021. CARSI awards funds for projects with defined periods of implementation. Every proposal must define the number of months it will require to implement the project, but all of the projects will be starting on September 30, 2021.

Question 3: When can project activities start? Will expenses incurred before the official start of the project be reimbursed?

Answer: CARSI grants can be used during a defined period of implementation. This period starts on September 30, 2021 and goes forth from there. Grantees and project implementers must not start project activities or incur in expenses before the project’s official start date. Expenses incurred before the official start of the period of implementation will not be reimbursed.

Question 4: Regarding the attachments, the NOFO states that we are allowed a total of 9 pages, and can use pages 5-7 for “additional optional attachments” such as letters of support. Are we able to use more than two pages for Letters of Support as long as we stay within the total 9 page limit?

Answer: Yes. The 9-page limitation is provided since we recognize that one or two more of the required document contents in the section “Attachments” may require additional pages. As long as you stay within the 9-page limitation, yes, you may use more than 2 pages for “Letters of Support.” Please remember that the content for pages 5-7 includes more than just letters of support – it extends to MOUs or additional project timeline information.

Question 5: Could you please clarify the page limit for attachments such as “Roles and Responsibilities of Key Project Personnel” and “Timeline”? Could you also please confirm that, overall, the page limit is 9 pages for all attachments?

Answer: The “Attachments” section should not exceed 9 pgs. We have estimated the following:

- Monitoring Plan: may be 1-2pgs
- Roles & Responsibilities: about 1pg
- Timeline: about 1pg
- Optional information to include: 2-3 pgs

The above totals to 7 pages, but given that certain attachments may require additional space, such as for “roles and responsibilities, letters of support, etc., the applicant may use up to 9 pages for any attachments they are submitting.

Question 6: Referring to the project timeline that can be provide as an attachment to the proposal, should it include long term effects/activities foreseen to happen after the end of the project – specifically as it relates to sustainability and multiplier effect?

Answer: The project timeline can be limited to the activities that will take place during the project’s period of implementation. However, we encourage applicants to address sustainability and multiplier effect in the project description section of the proposal.

Question 7: On the SF-424, should fields 5a. Applicant Identifier and 5b. Federal Entity Identifier be left blank?

Answer: Yes, fields 5a. and 5b. of the SF-424 should be left blank. For more detailed instructions on how to fill out the SF-424 and SF-424A refer to TAB D of the NOFO.

Question 8: On the SF-424, field 17, the NOFO states the start date should be September 30, 2020. Is this correct?

Answer: No, that is incorrect. The SF-424 should indicate a start date of September 30, 2021 on field 17.

Question 9: Should all proposal forms be submitted through Grants.gov (i.e. cover sheet, excel budget sheet, project proposal template, SF-424 form)? Do we fill forms online or do we upload attachments?

Answer: The complete proposal, forms included, should be submitted through grants.gov. The grants.gov system allows applicants to fill out the SF-424 and SF424A forms online and upload the rest of the proposal. For more information about applying to grants through grants.gov refer to the Grants.gov Online Help page:
<https://www.grants.gov/help/html/help/index.htm#t=GetStarted%2FGetStarted.htm>.

Question 10: Can the proposal be submitted via email?

Answer: The complete proposal, forms included, should be submitted through grants.gov. No documents or forms should be submitted through email.

Question 11: Once an application is started through grants.gov - can it be saved, paused, and returned to?

Answer: Once an application is started through grants.gov it can be saved, paused and returned to at a later point.

Question 12: The SF-424 form is an editable format. However, the cover sheet and project proposal are not. Is this something I do directly within the Grants.gov system?

Answer: The SF-424 forms can be filled out directly through grants.gov. The rest of the documents can be uploaded into the Grants.gov application page. Applicants are encouraged to submit multiple documents in a single Microsoft Word file (i.e., Cover Sheet, Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Proposal Narrative and Budget Narrative). There is a Word version of Cover Letter and an Excel version of the Budget Worksheet in grants.gov, under the Related Documents tab, that can be downloaded and edited.

Question 13: The application package in Grants.gov doesn't list some of the required documents in the application, such as the cover letter. I only have the templates included in the application links. What should I do?

Answer: The package in Grants.gov only includes standard sections. Applicants are encouraged to submit multiple documents in a single Microsoft Word file (i.e., Cover Sheet, Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Proposal Narrative and Budget Narrative). Alternatively, documents not listed in the grants.gov package but requested in the NOFO can be included as Attachments and will not count towards the Attachment page limit. There is a Word version of Cover Letter and an Excel version of the Budget Worksheet in grants.gov, under the Related Documents tab, that can be downloaded and edited.

Question 14: I'm logged into the Grants.gov and looking at the NOFO, however the "apply" button is inactive. What do I need to do to activate the apply button?

Answer: Individual user accounts in Grants.gov need to be affiliated to an organization and have the appropriate "role" designation to apply to funding opportunities. It's likely you do not have the appropriate role designation to initiate applications for funding opportunities. We suggest you contact your organization's Grants.gov account administrator for more details. For more information on applying to grants through Grants.gov refer to the Grants.gov Online Help: <https://www.grants.gov/help/html/help/index.htm#t=GetStarted%2FGetStarted.htm> or contact the Grants.gov Support Line at 1-800-518-4726.

Miscellaneous

Question 1: The presentation [given in the informational session] outlined four thematic areas. I remember having seen a description of sub-themes below each area. Are those sub-themes still applicable?

Answer: The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) outlines the four objectives this opportunity is focused and provides a brief description below each objective. In this

presentation we've summarized the general parameters of the NOFO, but all the details included in the document are still applicable and current.

Question 2: Can a civil service or non-government organization focus on any of the funding opportunity objectives?

Answer: A civil service or non-governmental organization can submit an application focused on any of the objectives outlined in the NOFO.

Question 3: Do you have any preferred contractors for translating documents and simultaneous translation in Panama?

Answer: The Embassy does not have any preferred contractors.

Question 4: How many projects can be submitted by each ONG?

Answer: Applicants can submit more than one proposal. However, any successful applicant will only have one proposal approved. Your NGO should consider whether it's best to expend its resources in submitting one competitive proposal, or expending resources in submitting more than one. The CARSI proposal review tends to be a competitive process.

Question 5: Is Panama a USAID recipient country?

Answer: Panama is not an a USAID recipient country

Question 6: Will the selected recipients of the awards need to finance the initial phase of the project?

Answer: Award payments can be processed after the period of implementation has begun and the mechanism for payments has been established. Award recipients can request an advance to start project activities, or they can start the project and then request a reimbursement. Approval for advances is at the discretion of the Grants Officer. Usually, payments associated to CARSI grants are done in installments, throughout the life of the grant, as reimbursements.

Question 7: Do you accept unsolicited proposals?

Answer: Unsolicited proposals can be submitted to the Embassy. However, organizations should consider that most funding opportunities at the Embassy are advertised through NOFOs with specific objectives and application timelines. Applications for CARSI awards are only accepted and reviewed on an annual basis, usually between the April and June, as defined by each year's NOFO.

Question 8: Can CARSI funds be used to facilitate improved effectiveness in the sanctioning of cases leveraging coordination between law enforcement institutions?

Answer: The funding awarded under this NOFO could be used to facilitate improved effectiveness in the sanctioning of cases leveraging coordination between law enforcement institutions.

Question 9: Can CARSI funds be used for capacity building directed at judges, judiciary advisors, prosecutors, to enable effective processing and sanctioning?

Answer: The funding awarded under this NOFO could be used for capacity building directed at judges, judiciary advisors and prosecutors, to enable effective processing and sanctioning.

Question 10: Can CARSI funds be used to train law enforcement officers?

Answer: CARSI funds cannot be used for law enforcement or to train law enforcement officers.

Question 11: We've been reviewing the guidelines and observed you are not requiring an SOI. Based on this, could an NGO/university submit more than one proposal or is there a requirement of only one proposal per NGO/university?

Answer: The CARSI grants application process does not require a Statement of Interest (SOI). Applicants can submit more than one proposal. However, only one award will be granted per applicant. We encourage NGO/universities evaluate how they prefer to invest their resources since the CARSI proposal review tends to be a competitive process.

Question 12: Will I be able to ask questions about the process/forms related to the NOFO after the deadline for questions?

Answer: The deadline for questions is May 20, 2021 11:59 PM EST. We will not be able to answer questions related to the NOFO or the application process/forms after then.

Question 13: The NOFO mentions that the answers to questions from other applicants will be provided as an amendment. Do you have an estimate of when we expect this information to be published online?

Answer: The due date for submitting questions is Thursday, May 20 at 5PM EST. We expect to publish all questions and answers online by Tuesday, May 25, 2021 as an amendment to the existing Questions and Answers document.

END OF DOCUMENT
PUBLISHED ON MAY 26, 2021