

Announcement Type: Open Competition Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Title: EXBS Balkans Logistics and SME Support
Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0009309
NOFO Qs & As

Q1. If submitting proposals for two (2) distinct LOEs, does the applicant submit one (1) application that contains two separate, dedicated proposal narratives (one narrative dedicated to each LOE)? Or does the applicant submit two (2) separate applications for each LOE in SAMS?

A1. When submitting proposals for this NOFO, which contains two (2) interconnected, interdependent LOEs, the applicant should submit one (1) application that contains two separate, dedicated proposal narratives (one narrative dedicated to each LOE).

Q2. To fully incorporate the USG answers to questions, we request an extension on the due date.

A2. No, we cannot grant an extension on the deadline for this or any NOFO.

All applications must be submitted by March 04, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. EST. Applications submitted after 5:00 p.m. EST will be ineligible for consideration. We recommend that applicants begin the application process early, as this will allow time to address any technical difficulties that may arise in advance of the deadline. Faxed proposals will not be accepted at any time. Late applications will not be considered. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that proposals are submitted on time.

Q3. Page 7 - The NOFO specifically says delegates must have four-star hotel accommodations, does the four-star hotel requirement apply to any other participants?

Please define delegate.

If this requirement includes other participants, such as trainees, please specify who the four-star requirement applies to.

A3. The four-star hotel requirement can be waived if/when four-star hotels are not available. The Grantee will request authorization providing the supporting documentation to the Grant Officer to waive the four-star hotel requirement. Yes, this requirement applies to any other participants/delegates.

Q4. Page 7 - Is the budget of \$1,045,251 solely to cover the labor costs of logistics coordination and support for the 70 events listed, or is the budget expected to be utilized both for labor costs and for travel related ODCs (airfare, lodging, per diem, interpretation, translation, travel insurance, and equipment rental).

A4. These funds must cover implementer labor costs AND all logistics costs associated with up to 70 events i.e., travel related ODCs (airfare, lodging, per diem, interpretation, translation, travel insurance, and equipment rental).

Q5. Page 7 - If the budget of \$1,045,251 is expected to be used for travel related ODCs, is it expected to cover all 70 events as described or is the recipient expected to select and cost out a subset of events that will best support ISN/ECC activities? The 4-star hotel requirement alone creates cost pressures that will likely exceed the \$1,045,251 budget across 70 events. Will the government clarify estimating assumptions for Logistics support for EXBS events?

A5. These funds must cover implementer labor costs AND all logistics costs associated with up to 70 events i.e., travel related ODCs (airfare, lodging, per diem, interpretation, translation, travel insurance, and equipment rental). However, not all events will require all types of logistical support mentioned in the NOFO i.e., lodging, airfare, travel insurance, etc. The recipient is not expected to select and cost out a subset of events that will best support ISN/ECC activities.

Four-star hotels will not be required for all events. Implementers may average the cost to be equivalent to a 3-star hotel with some exceptions where lodging could be less or a little more.

Upon award, ECC will submit to the implementer the agreed upon standard form specifying the exact type(s) of logistical support required for each individual event. ECC prepares separate cost estimates prior to submitting to the contractor, spelling out required services in separate line items for each event. The cost estimate is based on current and actual market prices but are not necessarily confirmed as such. ECC may choose to provide the contractor with the cost estimate along with the event-specific SOW and TRL for reference purposes.

Q6. Page 8 - Are the activities for SBI and TBI countries designed to be attended solely by the countries listed or is the intent that the countries listed would host other SBI or TBI countries during the activity? For example, would an Albanian activity be designed to be attended by 30 Albanian personnel or a mix of personnel from Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia? Clarification is required to accurately budget travel.

A6. Most EXBS events are regional in nature, so the intent is that the countries listed would host other SBI or TBI countries during the activity, however, we will also be executing single country programs on a less frequent basis. Implementers may estimate 10 single country programs in addition to the 10 virtual events estimated for North Macedonia.

Q7. Should the implementer make estimating assumptions regarding the number of participants travelling to an event? What is the expected number of locally residing attendees versus those requiring travel into the country?

A7. The contractor will not have to make assumptions as ECC will provide the number of travelling participants prior to the event. For application budgeting purposes for regional events, assume only host country participants won't require lodging, travel, etc. For events such as best practice visits, assume all attendees travel.

Q8. Page 8 - For events in the United States, will Visa waivers be allowed to reduce cost and facilitate entry into the U.S. for trainees and SMEs?

A8. The Visa Waiver Program (VWP), administered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in consultation with the State Department, permits citizens of 40 countries to travel to the United States for business or tourism for stays of up to 90 days without a visa. countries. This is not applicable to WB countries.

Q9. Is it ISN/ECCs intent to approve selected SMEs prior to each training event?

A9. Yes. The EXBS Balkans team may also propose experts they have worked with on similar activities with a proven record of quality delivery or where continuity of instruction, consultation, or mentoring is required.

Q10. Page 8 - "EXBS will specify the exact type(s) of logistical support required for each individual event when submitting this form and may request to utilize specific post-approved interpreters, hotels, etc." Please advise how EXBS will address cost deltas between what the implementer provides in the budget on a per night (hotel) or per day (interpreter) cost and the cost of hotel or interpreters specifically requested by EXBS.

A10. Implementers will only bill for and be paid for actuals within the budget. Implementers will need to do their best to plan their budget accordingly. If additional funds are required, then funds can be repurposed in advance from another budget category. The repurposing of any funds must be authorized by the Grant Officer prior to the activity.

Q11. Page 8 - Does ISN/ECC require an on-site logistics coordinator/host be provided by the implementer?

A11. No. This is not needed as our forward deployed team handles on the ground support.

Q12. Section 2.e Integrated DEIA Plans should be no more 250 words per project. If the applicant chooses to integrate DEIA Plans into their proposals, they should do so in accordance with the template provided as part of the Notice for Funding Opportunity. We are unable to find the template with the solicitation documents, please provide the template.

A12. There is not a template provided, please see the below requirements for the DEIA Plan Proposal:

One page Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Plan

DEIA Plans should address the following categories, the pursuit of which should not take precedence over a proposal's core goals. See Appendix A for definitions of key concepts.

- *Support staff DEIA:* Consider a diverse pool of potential implementers and sub-implementers to afford employment opportunities to as diverse and inclusive a population as is feasible
- *SME DEIA:* To the extent possible, consider a diverse population of subject matter experts to deliver training, lead discussions, and present technical information. This may include engaging local and regional experts as trainers.

ISN-ECC FY23 NOFO SAMS Domestic 12

- (Note: applicants should not discuss proposals directly with local partners without the explicit approval of ISN.)
- *Audience DEIA:* Consider how to engage a diverse, representative cross-section of the target-audience population while taking into account the objectives of the engagement. This might include considering local representation disparities that are not immediately apparent to those from another culture.
- *Accessibility:* Consider how to actively reduce or eliminate obstacles that would impede participation by people with disabilities.

Plan contents and submission

Applicants may use DEIA Plans to describe how proposals will achieve one or more of the DEIA objectives identified above. Plans need not include specific performance targets, but they should outline any concrete steps or key partners the implementer would leverage to achieve the objectives. Plans

may also include information about the applicant's past performance on DEIA-related metrics, both as an employer and as an implementer, and any country specific gender analysis to be conducted. Plans may consist of two separate elements as noted below; implementers can submit one or both elements as part of their proposal. The first element is the project-specific DEIA statement, and the second element is the standalone DEIA summary document.

The first element is project specific language to be integrated into their project proposal consistent with the objectives above. This could consist of actions to be completed as part of the project, demographic targets for participants, key partners that will assist with delivery/implementation, and outside any organization to be engaged if the project is funded. Integrated DEIA Plans should be no more 250 words per project. If the applicant chooses to integrate DEIA Plans into their proposals, they should do so in accordance with the template provided as part of the Notice for Funding Opportunity.

The other element is a standalone document (one per proposal). The standalone DEIA Plan should identify proposal-wide actions, highlight past performance, highlight staffing information that will impact the performance of the projects, or articulate examples of previous steps taken consistent with the objectives above. Standalone document should be no longer than one page on standard letter paper with one-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font.

Q13. This requirement is consistent with the scope that can be ordered from the ISN/ECC Services Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (ID/IQ) vehicles, reference contract #SAQMMA17D0112. The ordering period remains valid through November 23, 2023, and a resultant task order period of performance would still be manageable within the ID/IQ. Can the Government explain the derived benefit for departing from that contract vehicle?

A13. Given the scope, size, duration, and complexity of the proposed Project, the US Government has chosen a grant mechanism process instead of contractual approach. This is consistent with other ISN/ECC programs that are funded via grants and depending on availability of funds.

Q14. The Government solicited logistics support in TORPs 22-001 and 22-004. Our organization responded to both TORPs but never received feedback on our submission and whether an award was made to one of the other ID-IQ holders. Can the Government provide this information?

A14. This is a notice of funding opportunity for a cooperative agreement, not a contract.

Q15. For any virtual events, which platforms are approved for use by DOS?

A15. The approved platforms are WebEX, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom for Government (ZfG)

Q16. Will the contractor be responsible for costs associated with hosting on a virtual platform?

A16. Yes, the implementer will be responsible for these costs.

Q17. Will after action reports (AAR) be required after each event or just captured in the quarterly progress reports?

A17. SMEs will provide AARs after each event within 10 business days from the conclusion of the event. The recipient of this award will only be required to capture this information in the quarterly progress reports.