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Department of Homeland Security Science & Technology Directorate (DHS/S&T)
Terrorism Prevention and Counterterrorism Research (TPCR) Center of Excellence

Center Lead NOFO: DHS-19-ST-061-TPCR-LEAD
Center Partner NOFO: DHS-19-ST-061-TPCR-PARTNER

DHS Grants and Program Offices received the following questions regarding the above referenced Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs). Based on the NOFO published material, the following answers ensure that all interested applicants have the same information. The identity of the institution asking the question will not be provided. Questions have been edited to provide clarity.

Questions may be added in the weeks to come.

Question #1: Both Lead and Partner NOFOs state that "*Center Partner institution partnerships with foreign institutions are permitted, but may require special justification and approval from DHS. The applicant can include team members who are non-U.S. citizens; however, the proposed Center Director must be a U.S. citizen eligible for a security clearance.*" Is a foreign institution eligible to apply for funding as a Partner with a U.S. University acting as the Center Lead?

Answer:

To clarify the statement in Section C, please refer to the explanation of a foreign institution's eligibility under responses to Center Lead and Center Partner NOFOs below.

Eligibility under Center Lead Application:

- The Center Lead may not be a foreign institution. Per NOFO Section C of both Lead and Partner NOFOs, "The Center Lead designation is restricted to an accredited institution of higher education in the United States, in accordance with 6 U.S.C. 188(b)(2)(A) which specifies: "The Secretary, acting through the Under Secretary for Science and Technology, shall designate a university-based center or several university-based centers for homeland security."""
- The Director of the Center Lead must be a U.S. citizen as stated in NOFO Section C of both Lead and Partner NOFOs.
- As stated in the NOFOs, "Center Partner institution partnerships with foreign institutions are permitted," meaning Center Leads may have partnerships with foreign institutions. Centers may also have team members who are non-U.S. citizens with the exception of the Director.

- If foreign institutions are included on the Center Lead application as a Center Partner, DHS will determine the suitability of the institution as it relates to the applicant's proposed research project and end users. As stated in Section C, "Partnerships with foreign institutions are permitted, but may require special justification and approval from DHS."
- Foreign institutions partnering with Center Leads will be subject to the Terms and Conditions listed in Appendix I. of the NOFO, including compliance with U.S. export controls as outlined in Article II, Section H. of the Terms and Conditions.

Eligibility under Center Partner Application:

- Please refer to NOFO Section C of both Lead and partner NOFOs, "Center Partner institution partnerships with foreign institutions are permitted," meaning foreign institutions may be Center Partners. As such, foreign institutions may apply to be a Center Partner directly by responding the Center Partner NOFO.
- Partners under a Center Lead application may not submit the same application under the Partner NOFO.
- Note, if foreign institutions respond to the Center Partner NOFO, DHS will determine the suitability of the institution as it relates to the applicant's proposed research project and end users. As stated in NOFO Section C, "Partnerships with foreign institutions are permitted, but may require special justification and approval from DHS."
- Foreign institutions applying to be Center Partners will be subject to the Terms and Conditions listed in Appendix I. of the NOFO, including compliance with U.S. export controls as outlined in Article II, Section H. of the Terms and Conditions.

Question #2: May a university apply as either a Lead institution or a Partner institution for TPCR COE if it already runs or has in the past run a DHS S&T COE?

Answer:

Any accredited U.S. university may apply as either a Lead or a Partner. If a DHS COE was a prior DHS COE lead, the applicant will undergo a past performance review. Please refer to Center Lead NOFO Section C, IV. Past Performance Review for additional evaluation criteria for universities that led DHS COEs. This score will account for 25% of the proposal's final score, while the site visit will account for 75% (of which, scientific quality will account for 20%).

For additional relevant information, refer to Center Lead NOFO Section E, Application Review Information, Geographic Distribution of the COEs, which states, "… the Under Secretary for Science and Technology, shall operate extramural research, development, demonstration, testing and evaluation programs so as to ensure that colleges, universities, private research institutes and companies from as many regions of the United States as practicable participate." More specifically, the NOFO emphasizes that "close proximity to another COE lead institution may result in a lower rating." Geography and other factors including in-kind contributions, and strength of commitment to engage and conduct mission-related research with DHS will account for 10% of the proposal's final score if it reaches the final phase.

Previous participation as a COE Lead is not included in the evaluation of Center Partner applications.

Question #3: If an institution wants to submit a single project proposal, should it respond to the Lead or Partner NOFO?

Answer:
Please refer to the first paragraph of the Center Partner NOFO Section I. Program Overview. To

clarify, the paragraph should be revised to state:

> The DHS S&T Office of University Programs (OUP) is requesting applications from accredited U.S. colleges and universities to serve as a partner institution for a TPCR COE. OUP is also posting a separate NOFO for eligible applicants to submit lead proposals for consideration. Please see NOFO Number DHS-19-ST-061-TPCR-Lead or 97.061 on https://www.grants.gov/ for directions on how to submit a response for to the Center Lead NOFO. DHS will select qualified individual projects from applications received for either the Center Lead NOFO or the Center Partner NOFO, regardless of the institution that is awarded as lead institution. Principal Investigators that are already Partners under a Center Lead application may not submit the same application under this Partner NOFO.

Question #4: Is it acceptable for an institution to use a system to generate the paperwork for the response to the Lead or Partner NOFO?

Answer:
Please see the Section D. Application and Submission Information in both Lead (pages 39 – 48) and Partner (pages 32 – 41) NOFOs. The necessary documentation and means of submission are outlined in this section. Note, applications must abide by page limitations as instructed in the NOFOs.

Question #5: Do applicants need to produce a R&R budget as well as a Non-construction budget?

Answer:
Please see the Section D. Application and Submission Information in both Lead (pages 39 – 48) and Partner (pages 32 – 41) NOFOs. Within this section, specifically refer to the Content and Form of Application Submission Sections I. SF424 (R&R) Application for Federal Assistance (SF424-V2.0) and Section II. Budget Information, Non Construction Programs (SF424A-V1.1).

Question #6: In both NOFOs, the Terms and Conditions located in the Appendix include the requirement to submit a budget that are allocated to five categories. Does this apply to responses to the NOFO?

Answer:
This requirement applies to annual work plans as stated in the Terms and Conditions. For the purposes of this application, please respond based on the requirements outlined in Section D. Application and Submission Information in both Lead and Partner NOFOs. Once awarded, the Lead institution will submit annual and semi-annual work plans that include information on the allocation of the budget into five categories: Administration & Execution, Research & Development, Customer Outreach & Communication, and Transition. These budget categories are associated to work plans, not the response to this NOFO.

Question #7: Is a budget justification required and if so, is there a page limitation?

Answer:
A budget justification is required. Applicants should stay within the page limitations for the entire application package.

Question #8: Which DHS Components have mission/operational areas that are applicable to the scope of the TPCR COE research areas?

Answer:
The overarching Center vision and the DHS Operational environment is described extensively throughout the NOFO, please read these sections in their entirety to better understand the vision and Component mission areas.

Question #9: Is there a profit fee allowed for this funding opportunity?

Answer:
Direct and indirect rates are requested by the institutions and negotiated with a federal cognizant agency. Lead institutions are responsible for all negotiation of sub awards to other academic institutions and commercial partners.

Question #10: Is there a template for bio sketches that DHS prefers?

Answer:
DHS does not have single template for biosketches. Please refer to pages 42 - 43 of the Lead NOFO for page limits and required information.

Question #11: Page 74 of the Lead NOFO, #9 states, "Papers, presentations, or other documents co-authored by a DHS employee and a COE researcher will be subject to DHS's publications approval process prior to dissemination of the publication by the authors." Could you clarify what the publication approval process entails?

Answer:
Please refer to the Review of External Publications published by the Department of Homeland Security, Management Directives System for more information regarding DHS's publication (where a DHS employee is a co-author) approval process: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/mgmt_directive_2260.1_review_of_external_publications.pdf . For more information regarding the reporting requirements on publications, please refer to the Terms and Conditions section in the NOFO.

Question #12: If two universities are collaborating, how do we distinguish which is a Lead and which is a Partner or do both apply as Co-Leads?

Answer:
DHS will only accept a single institution to lead the Center. As described in Section C. Eligibility Information, the applicant institution must be identified as the official lead for proposal submission and subsequent negotiations. Center lead applicants are encouraged to partner with industry, other academic institutions, public sector institutions, and non-profit institutions. The Center Lead institution will fund the partnering institutions through sub-awards. Note, as stated in Section B. Federal Award Information, "DHS reserves the right to select research and/or education projects submitted in response to the Center Lead and/or Partner NOFOs and combine them to create the research and education portfolio for the new Center." Although a Center Lead applicant may include a Partner on its application in the form of research and/or education project(s), DHS may choose to not fund the Partner's project(s).

Question #13: Are colleges eligible to apply to be a Center Partner?

Answer:
Eligible Center Partners include accredited universities and colleges, commercial industry, and/or non-profit organizations. The Center of Excellence Lead must be an accredited U.S. college or university.

Question #14: Are potential applicants required to submit biographical sketches for principal investigators who are not part of the leadership or staff of the Center?

Answer:
According to the Content and Form of Application Submission section of the NOFO, specifically under the subheading D. Research & Related: Senior/ Key Personnel Profile, "Applicants must complete a profile for all principal investigators as well as any other senior key personnel on the

project."

Questions #15: Can non-profit organizations apply to the Partner NOFO?

Answer:
Yes, accredited colleges and universities, commercial industry, and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply to the Partner NOFO. However, nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. Language pertaining to eligibility requirements have been updated in the Partner NOFO to clarify this.

Question #16: The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) states, "DHS will accept only one application for Center Lead from any single university for review. Proposals must be submitted by an accredited U.S. institution of higher education that along with its chosen partners, has the ability and capacity to conduct the required research." For larger Universities that have different colleges or schools within the overarching system, i.e. School of Business, School of Public Health, etc., can each of these schools that maintain different DUNS numbers submit a unique application to the NOFO – Center Lead?

Answer:
The TPCR NOFO, under the *Eligibility Information* section, states that "DHS will only accept one application from a given University as the Lead Institution". DHS recommends Applicants coordinate between interested divisions or schools within the University system to submit one application to the Lead NOFO. Universities and eligible applicants may submit more than one application to the Partner NOFO. In addition to objective, novel science, managing a DHS Center of Excellence requires teaming, coordinated and efficient business functions and legal counsel, flexibility, and innovative and relevant science and technology development and transition processes.

Question #17: On Page 12, the NOFO states, "Selected COE Directors and Research Theme leaders must spend 1-3 months in DHS operational environments early in the research life cycle to understand both the technical and business requirements of DHS Components." How should this be reflected in the proposed budget? Will this entail multiple trips to multiple locations or an extended stay in one? Will the Center be responsible for covering housing costs from its own budget?

Answer:
Potential applicants should include the estimated costs associated with traveling to locations in the budget submitted in the NOFO application. DHS recommends that potential applicants should also become familiar with location(s) and Components that would be most relevant to the research that the University proposes to conduct in response to the NOFO. Understanding the technical and business requirements of DHS Components is essential for successful project implementation and research/technology transition.

Question #18: Page 15 of the NOFO states, "Provide a comprehensive bibliography of their own and others relevant publications.... Applicants should provide a bibliography under 'Other Attachments.'" However, on page 43 a Bibliography & References Cited item is required as Item 9 of the "Research & Related Other Project Information" section. Is there a difference between the two?

Answer:
For every group of related projects proposed, applicants must provide a comprehensive bibliography of their own and others relevant publications. Omitting these supporting documents

may result in DHS dismissing a proposal without review. The reference of a bibliography on page 15 and page 43 are the same, page 43 emphasizes the suggested page formatting. Please submit your bibliography (item 9) entitled "Bibliography & References". Please note that this section is limited to 5 pages, single-spaced, with 12 point Times New Roman font, and one-inch margins.

Question #19: Can two universities in different states apply as co-leads?

Answer:
DHS will select a single institution to lead the Center, although DHS has awarded Center Co-leads in the past. Lead institution must be an accredited U.S. based academic institution, with research partners from other universities, the commercial sector, national laboratories, and state and local consortia that work closely with each other and with DHS Offices and Components. DHS will select qualified individual projects from applications received for either the Center Lead NOFO or the Center Partner NOFO, regardless of the institution that is awarded as lead institution.

Question #20: Does DHS S&T have a directory for service consulting firms that specialize in providing consultation services to potential applicants to this NOFO with tasks such as the application process and/or commercialization support? If so, how would a consulting company be incorporated into this directory?

Answer:
DHS does not currently maintain a directory of service consulting firms for potential applicants. DHS S&T encourages applicants to utilize existing university resources, consulting firms, or other partners to supplement knowledge gaps.

Question #21: How does Veteran owned businesses partner with potential COE Lead Institutions?

Answer:
Interested businesses should apply to the Partner Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). DHS encourages interested parties to form new partnerships or leverage existing partnerships that can help address the capability gaps described in the NOFO. DHS will select qualified individual projects from applications received for either the Center Lead NOFO or the Center Partner NOFO, regardless of the institution that is awarded as lead institution.

Question #22: Can a Lead Applicant team up with a small business?

Answer:
DHS encourages interested parties to form new partnerships or leverage existing partnerships to successfully address the capability gaps described in the NOFO. The skillsets required to make a COE successful are more extensive than research expertise alone. COEs need to have the ability and commitment to communicate frequently with a variety of actors from federal staff, to attorneys, to university administrators, to the private sector.

COE partners may include other academic institutions, commercial industry, DHS Components, Department of Energy National Laboratories and other Federally-Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs), other federal agencies that have homeland security-relevant missions, state/local/tribal governments, non-profits, and first responder organizations.

DHS will select qualified individual projects from applications received for either the Center Lead NOFO or the Center Partner NOFO, regardless of the institution that is awarded as lead institution. Interested businesses should apply to the Partner NOFO. DHS may select qualified individual projects from applications received for either the Center Lead NOFO or the Center Partner NOFO, regardless of the institution that is awarded as lead institution.

Question #23: Will cost sharing be a review factor for Partner applications and if

so, how much will these be weighted?

Answer:
For information regarding cost share or match please see Section C "Eligibility Information" specifically the Cost Share or Match section.

Question #24: Is it advantageous for partner projects to have existing commercial partners in place, and also to have commercial investment as an in-kind match?

Answer:
Please review the evaluation criteria to assess how DHS will evaluate applications. Applicants should have an understanding of how to translate research to practice including licensing, the ability to work with transition partners, and an understanding of federal acquisition. In addition to scientists, COEs may include experts in finance, project management, education, training, outreach and marketing, intellectual property management, technology development, and technology transfer.

For more information on cost share/match, please refer to the eligibility criteria section of the NOFO, specifically section C "Eligibility Information." A cost match or a cost share is voluntary. However, the ability to extend the reach of DHS funds for research and education in support of its mission is an important consideration for DHS. In-kind contributions demonstrate a university's commitment to the COE. Identification of university in-kind contributions will result in a higher rating in DHS's overall proposal review.

Question#25: Are site visits required for partners or only COE lead?

Answer:
The site visit review will only be conducted at the top Center Lead candidates. Per the Lead NOFO, "The site visit is for proposals that have made it to the third and final review phase. The site visit review team will examine the results of the external and internal reviews and determine the extent to which the applicant's proposal and any site visit materials address the evaluation criteria listed in the NOFO."

Question#26: Is it helpful to partner with an institution in another geographic region?

Answer:
Please review Application Evaluation Criteria starting on page 54 of the Lead NOFO. Note, geographical distribution of COE lead and partner institutions will not be considered until the final phase of the review.

Question#27: Should the Lead institution treat Year 1 as an extended year based on the expected spring award date?

Answer:
DHS expects the institution receiving the award will have several milestones to accomplish related to establishing the Center (subcontracting, onboarding of staff, etc.) that the performance year will not start until July 1st.

Question#28: **The annual limit is $250,000. Does that include indirect costs or are indirect cost above and beyond the $250,000 limit?**

1. **The "additional information" found here: https://www.grantsolutions.gov/gs/preaward/previewPublicAnnouncement.do?id=64261 states that an application is to be submitted via Grantsolutions and all required signature must still be "original hardcopy signatures" and received by the Grants**

Servicing Office by the due date. Does this still hold true or should the application be submitted via grants.gov Workspace? Is a hard copy still required?

Answer: All applications must come through Grantsolutions and be signed electronically or by hand and uploaded; no hard copy is needed. The total amount must include the Indirect Costs.