Notice of Request for Information (RFI) on Barriers to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in applying for Nuclear Forensics Research Awards (NFRAs).

AGENCY:

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD) Office, Systems Support Directorate (SSD), Research and Development Division (RDD)

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) ONLY. This RFI is not a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) announcement, award, or any other type of solicitation; therefore, DHS is not accepting applications at this time. DHS may issue a NOFO or other solicitation in the future based on or related to the content and responses to this RFI; however, there is no guarantee that a NOFO or solicitation will be issued as a result of this RFI. This notice does not constitute a commitment by the Government. Providing a response to this request will not give any advantage to any organization in any subsequent Notice of Funding Opportunity. All information submitted in response to this announcement is voluntary, and the Government will not pay for information requested nor will it compensate any respondent for any cost incurred in developing information provided to the Government.

ACTION:

Request for Information

SUMMARY:

The Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD) Office, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, requests information on barriers encountered by Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in applying to Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) announcements for Nuclear Forensics Research Awards (NFRAs) under the National Nuclear Forensics Expertise Development Program (NNFEDP).

DATES:

Responses to this RFI must be received by May 15, 2023, by 5:00 p.m. (EST).

ADDRESS:

Interested parties may submit responses electronically to CWMD.TNF@hq.dhs.gov. Include "RFI: Barriers to HBCUs in applying for NFRAs" in the subject line of the email. Responses to this RFI should be prepared in accordance with the detailed instructions below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Please send any questions to the Grants Officer Shareef Prater, at: Shareef.Prater@HQ.DHS.GOV with a CC: to the Program Officer Sandra Gogol, at Sandra.Gogol@HQ.DHS.GOV

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The National Nuclear Forensics Expertise Development Program (NNFEDP) works to build a nuclear forensics workforce of recognized technical experts and leaders through fostering scholastic and research collaboration between and among academia, the national and defense laboratories, and the National Technical Nuclear Forensics (NTNF) Interagency. The implementation of the NNFEDP fulfills the requirements outlined in the Nuclear Forensics and Attribution Act (P.L.111-140) signed by President Obama on February 16, 2010. This program also aligns with Goal 1 of the DHS Strategic Plan fiscal years 2020-2024: "Counter Terrorism and Homeland Security Threats" and Objective 1.4: "Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction and Emerging Threats".

To accomplish this mandate, the following initiative has been implemented:

The Nuclear Forensics Research Award (NFRA) supports the establishment of a team of faculty, students, and technical staff at the national or defense laboratories to conduct research in the field of nuclear forensics. For details on last year's full NFRA NOFO announcement please visit the following link: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=342531

Questions for Input

We will use responses to this RFI to help us understand barriers encountered by HBCUs when applying to NOFO announcements for NFRAs under the NNFEDP framework.

Please clearly answer the following questions:

1. What are the barriers or impediments that prevented your institution, as an HBCU, from applying to the DHS NOFO for the NFRA awards? [Last year's NOFO announcement can be viewed at: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=342531]
2. In your opinion, how could these barriers or impediments be mitigated or removed?

3. What resources (funding, partnerships, facilities, etc.) might be needed to ensure potentially interested HBCUs can participate in the NOFO application?
4. How might DHS more effectively engage with HBCUs to ensure meaningful participation in future NOFOs for nuclear forensics research awards?
5. What other student opportunities should DHS consider to better engage with the HBCU community?
6. Please provide the following information about your institution:
    a. HBCU Name
    b. Contact Person Name
    c. Contact Person's address
    d. Contact Person's phone number
    e. Contact Person's email address

RFI Response Instructions

This RFI is not for a direct procurement, however, it seeks HBCU input to help understand challenges and improvements DHS can make in future NFRA award opportunities that will improve participation from HBCUs.

Please clearly state the specific question to which you are responding. Responders may answer as many or as few questions as they wish. DHS will not respond to individual submissions. A response to this RFI will not be viewed as a binding commitment to the government to implement the ideas discussed.

For this RFI, the Government intends to follow this approach:

1. **Posting RFI**

The Government has posted this RFI on Grants.gov. We welcome respondents from HBCUs to review and respond to the questions outlined above.

2. **Submission of Responses to the RFI by Interested Respondents**

Please submit responses to this RFI electronically in PDF format, to CWMD.TNF@hq.dhs.gov and CC: the Grants Officer Shareef Prater, at: Shareef.Prater@HQ.DHS.GOV **no later than 5:00 p.m. (EST) on May 15, 2023.** Please use email subject header "RFI Response: Barriers to HBCUs in applying for NFRAs" and your institution's name. In the body of the email, please include contact information for your institution (POC Name, Title, Phone, Email, Institution Name, and Institution Address).

3. **RFI Review**

The Government will complete its review of the RFI responses by 05/15. Any information obtained as a result of this RFI is intended to be used by the Government on a non-attribution basis for planning and strategy development. Do not submit any proposal/ application in response to this RFI. Only the information requested above will be considered. The Government is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information received or provide feedback/ answers to respondents with respect to any information submitted under this RFI. Responses to this RFI do not bind the Government to any further actions related to this topic.

Timeline Recap
03/08/2023: RFI Distributed and Posted by DHS/CWMD on Grants.gov
05/15/2023: Deadline for Respondent Submissions

Thank you in advance for your input, and we look forward to receiving your responses.