Questions and Answers – June 25, 2024

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF Economic and Business Affairs
Sister Ports Program: Bolstering Economic and Security Resilience in Foreign Ports
FUNDING OPPORTUNITY #: DFOP001659

Question #1: Could you please advise on the criteria applied to select the Port of Duqm instead of other Omani ports like Salalah or Sohar?

DOS Response: Per the NOFO, to maintain fairness, DOS will not provide guidance on proposal concept and design.

Question #2: What kind of support do you anticipate that the implementing organization will receive from the Department of State and the Customs and Border Protection Agency?

DOS Response: DOS is posting this NOFO as a Cooperative Agreement and anticipates "substantial involvement" from State. DOS will discuss this with the recommended applicant.

Question #3: Does the Department of State envision having a representative engaged in the selection of the Sister City Ports?

DOS Response: DOS anticipates having a representative engaged in the selection of Sister City Ports.

Question 4: Will the successful contractor also work with the Office of Transportation on this project? If not, will the Department of State coordinate the necessary communication between the contractor, the Department of State and the Office of Transportation?

DOS Response: The Office of Transportation is located within the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs.

Question 5: To create the Sister Port agreements, it will be necessary to include certain parties from the local government, potential business partners and the contractor team and/or Department of State or Transportation team. Is the Department of State willing to fund recommended visits between the four required sister city ports and others for generating additional foreign and U.S. port relationships?

DOS Response: Per the NOFO, to maintain fairness, DOS will not provide guidance on proposal concept and design. Please review the NOFO and prepare a proposal to the best of your ability.

Question 6: If Sister City relationships already exist, is it acceptable to use that existing relationship to create an economic partnership to create an ongoing commercial venture with businesses, etc. between the two identified ports? Many Sister City port relationships already exist but are not being used to foster economic development or commercial relations for import/export between the two ports. If that existing relationship is further developed by identifying potential commercial import/export opportunities between the ports resulting in the initiation of port activity, does this suffice as part of the program's goal to "introduce ports to new trade relationships" or do you prefer new Sister Port Agreements be established? With the goal to expand business opportunities for foreign parties with U. S. ports and further the establishment of U. S. port relationships with foreign ports, is it acceptable to use an existing Sister City relationship that does not have active trade to create ongoing trade activities to strengthen the relationship and expansion of business opportunities?

DOS Response: Per the NOFO, to maintain fairness, DOS will not provide guidance on proposal concept and design.

Question 7: Considering that some Sister Port Agreements are not operational or not being used as planned, would the enhancement of an existing Sister Port Agreement be acceptable? (in accordance with the NOFO expected outcomes and KPIs). In other words, does an existing sister port relationship disqualify these two ports of being selected as the Sister Port #2?

DOS Response: An existing sister port relationship does not disqualify two ports from being selected as the Sister Port #2.

Question 8: Has the Department of State conducted or authorized anyone to conduct a Sister City Port concept prior to this opportunity? If so, we would appreciate it if you could share that information and results. Has the Department of State identified any existing policies and/or processes that they feel need improvement in the Sister City Port concept?

DOS Response: No, the Department of State has not previously conducted or authorized anyone to conduct a Sister City Port concept.

Question 9: Could the information regarding the requirements within the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS) be provided in advance of any on-site visits to each facility?

DOS Response: DOS does not object to the requirements within the ISPS being shared prior to on-site visits to each port facility, pending approval and further coordination from the U.S. Coast Guard.

Question 10: Could you please clarify the reasons for specifying Peru in the NOFO?

DOS Response: DOS will discuss this with the recommended applicant. Please review the NOFO and prepare a response to the best of your abilities.

Question 11: Does the Department of State have any preference for Latin American or Caribbean ports to be Sister City Ports with a U.S. Port?

DOS Response: The Department of State does not have any preference for Latin American or Caribbean ports.

Question 12: Please confirm that the bidders may or may not identify the participating ports in the proposal stage.

DOS Response: Bidders are not required to identify the participating ports in the proposal stage.

Question 13: Could the same U.S. port engage in multiple sister port agreements and the same foreign port partner with multiple U.S. ports under this assignment?

DOS Response: DOS will discuss this with the recommended applicant. Please review the NOFO and prepare a proposal to the best of your abilities.

Question 14: Would you also consider a cruise component in addition to cargo for the forging of new business opportunities?

DOS Response: DOS will discuss this with the recommended applicant. Please review the NOFO and prepare a proposal to the best of your abilities.

Question 15: Given the time necessary to address the bidders' questions and incorporate the clarifications into the proposals, as well as the upcoming 4th of July holiday, we will be very grateful for you considering an extension of the current submission deadline by two weeks until July 22, 2024. The extension would benefit the quality of all offers submitted.

DOS Response: DOS is not able to grant an extension at this time. *Per the NOFO, Section G.2. Question Submission Deadline,* Prospective applicants are advised to regularly review the announcement page in grants.gov for any updates.