

**Questions and Answers for Countering Cartel Recruitment in Mexico -  
OFOP0002496  
March 2026**

1. In the “Participants and Audiences” section, six priority states are listed: Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas, Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guerrero. May a project focus on a selection of these states, or is it required to address all six?

**Answer:** Ideally, the project should be implemented in all six states.

2. For planning purposes, should applicants consider that vetting of participants may be required during the program? If so, what is the required advance notice period for individual vetting?

**Answer:** Yes. Refer to Section F, Point 3 – Program-Specific Requirements of the NOFO for details. In line with U.S. Department of State Leahy Amendment vetting rules, all participant information must be submitted at least 60 days before the training or program activity. Applicants should plan their timelines accordingly.

3. Is there any restriction if the lead applicant (prime) for this project is also serving as the prime recipient under another award?

**Answer:** There is no restriction on an organization serving as the prime recipient on multiple awards. Per 2 CFR 200.302 – Financial Management and 200.303 – Internal Controls; recipients must maintain adequate financial management systems and internal controls to manage each award separately and comply with all applicable federal requirements.

4. Can a proposal address all five stated objectives, or must applicants limit their proposal to one or two objectives?

**Answer:** Although the NOFO states that applicants are encouraged to focus on one or two project objectives, this language is not limited. Proposals may address more objectives, including all five, if appropriate to the proposed project.

5. Is there an expectation that Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 must be operationally integrated if proposed together, or can they be presented as modular components?

**Answer:** Objectives presented in the proposal should be complementary to each other. We welcome creativeness on how components and activities are presented in the proposals.

6. If an applicant proposes implementing Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4, must implementation be limited to the states referenced in Objective 5?

**Answer:** Yes

7. Does INL require prior federal or state-level authorization before naming specific states or municipalities in the proposal?

**Answer:** No at the proposal stage.

8. Is the expectation that the four objectives be implemented sequentially or simultaneously?

**Answer:** No, we welcome creativeness on how objectives should be implemented during the period of performance.

9. Does INL require alignment with specific Mexican federal strategies, or is alignment recommended but not mandatory?

**Answer:** It is not a requirement, but alignment to the Government of Mexico's strategies could help to get buy-in from counterparts. In addition, the awardee will need to align to current INL strategies. These will be shared with the awarded proposal by the beginning of the period of performance.

10. Are contingency or security risk mitigation costs allowable budget line items?

**Answer:** Contingency costs may be included in a budget if they are reasonably estimated and justified. Please consult 2 CFR 200.433 – Contingency provisions for additional guidance.

11. Does INL expect formal institutional adoption (such as incorporation into state law, official protocols) within the project period?

**Answer:** Yes

12. Will you provide the implementing partner a list of tainted agencies and/or persons that cannot receive US government assistance according to Leahy Law?

**Answer:** Refer to Section F, Point 3 – Program-Specific Requirements of the NOFO for details.

13. Which are the limitations for recruited persons to receive US Government assistance according to recent classification of TCOs as terrorist organizations?

**Answer:** This would need to be assessed by INL depending on the proposal

14. Could you please clarify what type of federal or state government agencies or offices are referred to in the NOFO as “deterrence” and “disengagement” agencies? Specifically, does INL envision these terms referring primarily to law enforcement entities, violence prevention programs, social services agencies, reintegration or youth support institutions, or a combination of these?

**Answer:** All government agencies/institutions related to this issue the applicant considers relevant to the proposal.

15. Could you please clarify whether applicants are expected to implement activities in all six priority states (Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas, Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guerrero), or if proposals focusing on a select number of these states would be acceptable?

**Answer:** Ideally, the project should be implemented in all six states.

16. The NOFO mentions that one or two objectives can be addressed. For a civil society organization with a territorial focus in Sinaloa, is it acceptable to submit a proposal that focuses exclusively on Objective 5 (awareness and prevention in vulnerable populations) without including the legal reform or prosecution protocol components (Objectives 1-4)?

**Answer:** Yes, while the NOFO encourages applicants to focus on one or two project objectives, this language is not limiting. Applicants may submit proposals that focus on a single objective.

17. As a local organization (IAP) without a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), can we apply the 15% de minimis rate on Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) throughout the 24-month budget period?

**Answer:** Yes. Refer to Section D, Point 2 – Indirect Costs of the NOFO for details.

18. Page 5, Section Participants and Audiences, states that targeted communities include six states—Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas, Jalisco, Michoacan, and Guerrero. Do proposed community interventions need to target communities in all six states, or can we propose targeted interventions in one or two states, for example.

**Answer:** Ideally, the project should be implemented in all six states.

19. Page 9, are there page limits for the Performance Monitoring Plan, the Project Risk Analysis, and Timeline, or as long as we use the provided templates, there are no page limits?

**Answer:** There are no specific page limits. Applicants should use the provided templates and include the requested information.

20. Page 8, the NOFO recommends incorporating a research or evaluation component so that lessons learned can inform broader stakeholders. Is an external or independent evaluation expected within the project design, or is monitoring through the Change Map and DevResults system considered sufficient?

**Answer:** Monitoring through the Change Map and DevResults system is expected for all projects, and applicants may propose additional research or evaluation components if appropriate to their project design.

21. Page 10 references Key Personnel, but the NOFO does not mention required Key Personnel. Are there required Key Personnel positions or should applicants propose their own key personnel?

**Answer:** Applicants should propose Key Personnel based on the needs and design of their proposed project.

22. Page 10, are there page limits for the budget narrative?

**Answer:** No. Please refer to answer on question #19.

23.Regarding the budget, is there a recommended exchange rate for Mexican Pesos to USD that applicants should use?

**Answer:** No.

24.Page 12, must an organization have an active SAM registration and UEI by April 6th, to submit a proposal?

**Answer:** Applicant's SAM.gov registration must be fully active at the time of proposal submission.

25.The NOFO encourages applicants to focus on one or two project objectives. In cases where activities across objectives are operationally interrelated (for example, where prevention activities inform prosecutorial or disengagement strategies), would INL consider proposals that primarily address one or two objectives while incorporating limited complementary activities aligned with other objectives to ensure coherence and effectiveness?

**Answer:** Applicants may tailor their activities to align with NOFO objectives. Please refer to Section E, Application review information of the NOFO for details on how the Technical Evaluation Panel assesses project analysis and design.

26.The NOFO notes that activities may incorporate “INL-provided data.” Should applicants also anticipate conducting diagnostic assessments or field-level analyses at the outset of the project to inform implementation design, and if so, should these be included in the proposed activities and budget?

**Answer:** This should be determined by the proposal as part of how the applicant envisions achieving the project goals.

27.The NOFO references “Government of Mexico deterrence and disengagement agencies.” Could INL clarify whether specific types of institutions are envisioned under this category (e.g., justice sector entities, social services, youth protection

institutions, or others), recognizing that deterrence and disengagement functions may span multiple sectors and levels of government?

**Answer:** All government agencies/institutions related to this issue the applicant considers relevant to the proposal.

28. The NOFO identifies six priority states under Objective 5 (Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas, Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guerrero) while also referencing “key Mexican states” and “priority states” more broadly. Could INL clarify whether these six states define the geographic scope for the entire project, or specifically for Objective 5 and related community-focused activities? Additionally, would implementers have the flexibility to recommend additional locations in coordination with INL if implementation considerations warrant?

**Answer:** Please refer to answer in question #1. Recommendations to additional locations are welcome

29. The NOFO states that participating institutions may adopt “pre-drafted standard legal procedures” and a “standard, pre-drafted policy” for deterrence and disengagement. Does INL expect applicants to develop these draft instruments as part of the project, or does INL already have model procedures, policy frameworks, baseline content, or technical parameters that applicants should build from?

**Answer:** INL will provide the awarded proposal with these instruments.

30. Are the vendors expected to already have connections with relevant stakeholders in Mexico, or will DOS facilitate those connections?

**Answer:** INL Mexico may assist, however, ideally the potential awardee should have the ability to reach out to authorities and stakeholders on its own.

31. Government Partnerships: Will INL facilitate introductions or support MOUs with key Mexican government agencies (e.g., Attorney General's Offices, social service agencies) to enable access for research, piloting, or training activities?

**Answer:** Please refer to answer on question #30.

32. Security and Risk Management: Are there particular security protocols, risk mitigation strategies, or known access limitations for fieldwork and community engagement in the six priority states?

**Answer:** No

33. Privacy and Ethics: What data-sharing agreements and privacy protections are required for participant and case data, especially when involving minors or former youth recruits?

**Answer:** Please consult 2 CFR 200.303 – Internal controls, section (e) for additional guidance.

34. Geographic Scope: Is it acceptable to propose a phased or pilot approach focusing on select states initially, or must activities address all six priority states from the outset?

**Answer:** Please refer to answer in question #1

35. *Objective 2 – Standard Legal Procedures.* Will grantees be permitted to access anonymized case files or observe legal proceedings for workflow mapping? If so, what approvals or coordination are needed?

**Answer:** The grantee will need to get this type of access.

36. *Objective 2 – Standard Legal Procedures.* Should standard legal procedures and SOPs align with both federal and state legal frameworks at once, or may initial activities focus on select jurisdictions for later adaptation?

**Answer:** Ideas on how implementation should be are welcome in the proposals.

37. *Objective 2 – Standard Legal Procedures.* Are there requirements regarding the language, formatting, or co-branding of manuals and digital resources?

**Answer:** Yes, Section F, Point 4 – Branding and Marking of the NOFO for details.

38. *Objective 3 – Deterrence and Disengagement Policy.* Do you have a potential source of subjects for qualitative interviews or will we need to find those sources? Are there recommended or minimum sample sizes, survey methods, or geographic guidelines for researching recruitment drivers and disengagement?

**Answer:** These should be proposed by the applicant.

39. *Objective 3 – Deterrence and Disengagement Policy.* May grant funds be used to compensate youth, families, or disengaged individuals for participation in research or pilot programs? If so, what are the ethical or budgetary guidelines?

**Answer:** No. These incentives might bias the program intent.

40. *Objective 4 – Protocol Implementation and Training.* Are there selection criteria for training participants from law enforcement or prosecution (e.g., agency, rank, years of service)? Would we have access to these personnel through the State Department?

**Answer:** The applicant should determine who should be trained and for what purpose. INL may assist on reaching out to Mexican institutions. However, ideally, the grantee should be able to access stakeholders on its own.

41. *Objective 4 – Protocol Implementation and Training.* Is there guidance or a preferred structure for Training-of-Trainers (ToT) models, including certification standards?

**Answer:** No

42. *Objective 4 – Protocol Implementation and Training.* Is the use of international trainers/experts permitted, or should all training be conducted by Mexican personnel?

**Answer:** This should be determined by the applicant on the proposal.