

## Questions and Answers for Cartel Recruitment Understanding & Suppression Hub (CRUSH) - OFOP0002504

February 2026

1. If selected, would there be flexibility during implementation to reallocate funds between budget categories (for example, among Personnel, Contractual, or Equipment), subject to prior approval by the Grants Officer, should the project's technical needs so require?

**Answer:** Yes, reallocation of funds between budget categories may be permitted; please consult 2 CFR 200.308 - Revision of budget and program plans for additional guidance.

2. Is the Hub expected to integrate its products and datasets with INL's existing monitoring and evaluation systems in Mexico, or would the expectation be to develop an independent but interoperable system?

**Answer:** INL's monitoring and evaluation systems only measure projects results and progress. Therefore, the project's products should independently be developed by the awardee

3. Could you clarify the intellectual property regime and dissemination rights applicable to products developed under the project (e.g., databases, analytical models, academic publications)? Would there be any restrictions beyond standard review and security procedures? Are there any anticipated limitations on public dissemination of findings?

**Answer:** No restrictions are considered at this moment, but it might depend on the security and political environment. The same applies for public dissemination, since this should be informed to and approved by INL prior to any publication takes place. The Department retains a royalty-free, nonexclusive, irrevocable right to use and share the work for Federal purposes, and the Federal Government may obtain and use data produced under a Federal award. Please consult CFR 200.315 for details.

4. Regarding geographic scope, are there specific priority states or regions where INL would consider granular, state-level intelligence strategically more relevant?

**Answer:** This project should include nation-wide coverage.

5. Could INL further clarify expectations regarding the level of public accessibility of analytical outputs produced by CRUSH?

**Answer:** While certain findings may remain restricted due to enforcement considerations, the initiative will generate public-facing reports and data products that can be broadly accessible, including open-access materials suitable for public consultation. Public outputs will focus on trends and policy-relevant analysis without disclosing sensitive operational details.

6. Would it be permissible for our organization to apply to both open grant notices from INL Mexico? If so, may the proposals be designed as complementary initiatives, considering their similar objectives and scope?

**Answer:** Yes, organizations can apply to any open opportunity.

7. CRUSH aims to equip the Mexican and U.S. governments, as well as civil society, with data and forecasts related to cartel recruitment. To what extent are you envisioning the outputs as open access or shared through restricted platforms?

**Answer:** Please refer to answers on question #5

8. We noticed a parallel call, which targets stakeholder engagement in six key Mexican states to support prevention strategies. How closely do you envision CRUSH aligning and coordinating with that project?

**Answer:** Coordination should be close to the other project. We expect that CRUSH will provide key information that will complement

9. While the engagement with INL will be conducted in English, CRUSH's outputs will be particularly relevant to policymakers in Mexico. Would you support designing CRUSH outputs in both English and Spanish to maximize accessibility and uptake?

**Answer:** Yes. English and Spanish versions of the project are fundamental.

10. Does INL expect the Cartel Recruitment Understanding & Suppression Hub (CRUSH) to operate nationwide from the outset, or should applicants prioritize specific high-impact Mexican states during initial implementation? If prioritization is anticipated, are there criteria INL recommends for selecting focus regions?

**Answer:** Please refer to answers on question #4

11. With respect to “field mapping to establish baselines and local context,” does INL anticipate primary data collection (e.g., direct community engagement, surveys, interviews), or should applicants primarily rely on secondary data integration and existing datasets?

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

12. The SOI indicates that the project should establish an “independent analytical hub.” How does INL define “independent” in this context? Should the hub be institutionally separate from government entities, or may it be hosted within an academic or civil society institution while maintaining analytical independence?

**Answer:** It may be hosted within an academic or civil society institution while maintaining analytical independence

13. Does INL have any preferences regarding long-term institutional ownership or hosting arrangements for the hub (e.g., an academic institution, a non-governmental organization, a government-affiliated entity, or a hybrid model), particularly with respect to sustainability beyond the project period?

**Answer:** INL does not have a prescriptive preference regarding long-term institutional hosting arrangements. Ideally, the project will incorporate a sustainability component, ensuring that the tools, data, and strategies developed under the CRUSH can remain useful and adaptable beyond the life of the award. By promoting local ownership, knowledge transfer, and scalable approaches, the initiative will be designed by the potential grantee to outlast initial funding and continue informing policies and interventions against cartel recruitment over the long term.

14. Are there existing INL-funded observatories, analytical hubs, or data integration platforms — in Mexico or other countries — that applicants should align with, build upon, or consider as reference models in designing the CRUSH initiative?

**Answer:** No.

15. Does INL maintain or have access to baseline data related to cartel recruitment trends that applicants are expected to incorporate into proposed analytical frameworks?

**Answer:** No.

16. The SOI notes that INL will collaborate on stakeholder engagement and facilitate connections with relevant entities. Beyond this facilitation role, should applicants anticipate primary responsibility for initiating and sustaining institutional relationships with Mexican federal and state entities?

**Answer:** Ideally, yes.

17.The SOI references the creation of “operational intelligence” on cartel recruitment. How does INL define operational intelligence in this context? Should outputs be designed for direct application by law enforcement entities, or primarily to inform strategic and policy-level decision-making?

**Answer:** In this context, operational intelligence refers to actionable analysis that directly informs law enforcement, prosecutorial, and policy decisions aimed at disrupting criminal recruitment.

18.Are there prior INL-supported analytical initiatives or observatory models that INL considers particularly effective or instructive for adaptation to the Mexico context?

**Answer:** No.

