NOFO SFOP0010258

Strengthening Inclusive Small Business Growth in Central America

Questions and Responses March 28, 2024

Question: SBDC accreditation: Where can we find the requirements of that accreditation? What is the Agency or Institution conducting the evaluation and delivering the SBDC accreditation?
Response: Each country determines their accreditation standards. Proposals could follow a model of helping local governments develop context specific accreditation standards, help provide guiding principles for local governments, and reporting best practices that could be used to help local governments apply accreditation standards that make sense for their distinct country's contexts.

Question: Our office has been reviewing the NOFO, which states on page 4 "Eligible applicants must be independent entities and should not be financially supported by the central governments of the respective countries." Would this eligibility apply to sub-awardees?
Response: This eligibility requirement applies to sub-award organizations, as the project cannot directly benefit the central government in Northern Central America countries.

Question: The accreditation must be provided by a specific program?
Response: Each country determines their accreditation standards. Proposals could follow a model of helping local governments develop context specific accreditation standards, help provide guiding principles for local governments, and reporting best practices that could be used to help local governments apply accreditation standards that make sense for their distinct country's contexts.

Question: Is it expected to work with a minimum number of SBDCs per country?
Response: There is no minimum number of SBDCs per country. Proposals should demonstrate the feasibility of their project and seek to design their project to have as much impact and reach as possible.

Question: About the proposal narrative section, the NOFO indicates 10 pages, while PSI says 20 pages, which one must be followed?
Response: This is an error in the NOFO. Please follow the PSI limit of 20 pages.

Question: Regarding the airfare, per diem, lodging and transportation for participants that travel from any of the 6 Central American countries to our city, what is the allowable rate (cost)?
Response: While there is no defined limit for travel costs, the project will be evaluated for efficiency and effective budgeting of funds. All costs need to be researched and justified in the Budget Narrative. Per diem and lodging rates cannot exceed U.S. government allowed per diem rates for the country being traveled to.

Question: What is the airfare, per diem, lodging, and transportation of contract consultants or personnel if they travel to any of the 6 countries in Central America?
Response: While there is no defined limit for travel costs, the project will be evaluated for efficiency and effective budgeting of funds. All costs need to be researched and justified in the Budget Narrative. Per diem and lodging rates cannot exceed U.S. government allowed per diem rates for the country being traveled to.

Question: On the budget, is it only required to input the total funds for the 3 years?

Response: All project costs for the lifetime of the project need to be reflected in the detailed line-item budget and the budget narrative.

Question: The NOFO states that "ideal projects will focus on one or more of the following objectives" followed by five objectives, with two activities each. To clarify, are applicants permitted to select one objective and the two activities associated with that objective to implement? Will preference be granted to applicants who can implement all objectives and activities?
Response: A successful application should include one or more of the included objectives and can expand upon the activities listed. It is encouraged to follow as many of the objectives and associated activities as possible to ensure the NOFO's goal is fulfilled. The proposal is not required to adhere to all of the objectives and activities, as it will be evaluated on the strength of the proposal and the accomplishment of projects main goals as noted in the NOFO.

Question: Are applicants expected to implement the activities in all six countries of focus under the NOFO?
Response: The proposal should have all six countries as beneficiaries of this project.

Question: Is there a particular international SBDC accreditation that this program is trying to align with to promote standardized accreditation processes in the Central American region?
Response: There is no particular international SBDC accreditation that the project is aligning with, as each country determines their accreditation standards. Proposals could follow a model of helping local governments develop context specific accreditation standards, help provide guiding principles for local governments, and reporting best practices that could be used to help local governments apply accreditation standards that make sense for their distinct country's contexts.

Question: Could you please clarify whether this NOFO is intended to be a standalone project focusing on one country in Central America, or if it should encompass multiple countries from the region?
Response: Proposals should have all six countries as beneficiaries of this project, not just one country.