NOFO SFOP0010258

Strengthening Inclusive Small Business Growth in Central America

Questions and Answers March 13, 2024

Question: I would like to learn more about the Strengthening Inclusive Small Business Growth in Central America you have available. How can I go about learning more about eligibility and how to apply?

Response: To learn more about the project design and objectives, please reference Section A in the notice of funding opportunity pages 5—11. For the eligibility criteria refer to Section C, page 13.

Question: I am wanting to know if a small business registered in USA and or Colombia is eligible for this grant?

Response: As noted on the NOFO cover page and Section C1, domestic and overseas based NGOs, U.S. based Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) or associations, and public international organizations (PIOs) are eligible to apply.

Question: NOFO p. 2 states that "proposals will support and train SBDCs to become accredited". For SBDCs in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, should proposals help them become accredited? Or would that be considered indirectly benefiting the central governments?

Response: Supporting accreditation process for non-accredited SBDCs should be part of the project design and is not considered benefiting the central government, as along as these SBDCs are not owned by the central government in these countries.

Question: Must applicants focus on all the countries listed on p. 3 (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama), or can they work with select countries from this list?

Response: As stated in the NOFO, this project seeks to support activities in all six countries (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama.)

Question: Are applicants required to follow the activities listed in each objective, or can they revise activities as they see fit?

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.

Question: NOFO p. 9 states that "International applicants must include collaboration with domestic organizations and institutions." Are subgrants to domestic organizations/institutions required for international implementers?

Response: Sub-grants with US or overseas organizations or institutions are not required.

Question: In the "Attachments", can the Roles and responsibilities of key project personnel and/or the Gender Analysis be longer than one page as long as they fit within the 9-page limit?

Response: If the attachments do not exceed the page limit, then the application can adjust the length of the documents. The number of pages for each attachment is a recommendation. Per PSI page 3, the page limit for the required "Attachments" is 10 and requires a risk assessment, despite the NOFO's page limit of 9.

Question: Do letters of support/memoranda of understanding count towards the 9-page limit under "Attachments"?

Response: The letters of support, memoranda of understanding, and any additional attachments do not count towards/ the page limit. Per PSI page 3, the page limit for the required "Attachments" is 10 and requires a risk assessment, despite the NOFO's page limit of 9.

Question: Can applicants work with public-private SBDCs in the Northern Central American countries if they are not fully owned by the central governments or their universities?

Response: Any SBDCs partially owned by the central government in Northern Central America, or its universities would still be considered benefiting the central government and could not be part of the project. Per the NOFO, any suggested SBDCs would need to be cleared by WHA/PPC before incorporating them in the project.

Question: "Required Outcome Indicators" listed in the NOFO: Could you please confirm our understanding that applicants are to use only the outcome indicators on the list that correspond to the Objectives they will be focusing on? (e.g., not use the indicator "SBDCs integrate small business into country internal supply chains" if the applicant is not focusing on Objective 4 "Integrate Small Businesses into Regional Supply Chains").

Response: The applicant would only need to include the "Required Outcome Indicators" which would apply to their project and the selected objectives. If an objective is not included, the applicant does not need to include the corresponding outcome indicator. For the successful applicant, the final project indicators will be negotiated before the proposed project is implemented. It is encouraged to use as many of the objectives and associated activities in the NOFO as possible.

Question: "Required Output Indicators" listed in the NOFO: Could you please clarify if applicants must use all four indicators listed, regardless of which objectives they choose to focus on?

Response: The applicant would only need to include the "Required Output Indicators" which would apply to their project and the selected objectives. If an objective is not included, the applicant doesn't need to include the corresponding output indicator. For the successful applicant, the final project indicators will be negotiated before the proposed project is implemented. It is encouraged to use as many of the objectives and associated activities in the NOFO as possible.

Question: Tab D of the NOFO: Under the checklist, it lists "additional attachments" not specified in the NOFO (e.g., resumes of key persons, proof of organization's legal status). Could you please clarify if these are required to be submitted? And if so, are they counted towards the 9-page limit for attachments?

Response: Additional attachments should be added if it is needed to support the project proposal (e.g. letters of support if the project proposal states an organization will provide assistance to project activities), but additional attachments are not required. Per PSI page 3, the page limit for the required "Attachments" is 10 and requires a risk assessment, despite the NOFO's page limit of 9.

Question: p.3 of the PSI lists "Risk Assessment" as a required attachment. Could you please clarify if one is required for this NOFO?

Response: Per PSI page 3, a Risk Assessment is a required attachment for the project proposal. The page limit for the required attachments is 10, despite the NOFO's page limit of 9.

Question: Can an SBDC be formed as part of the program, or applicants must work with existing SBDCs only?

Response: The focus of the project needs to be addressing current SBDCs. SBDCs could be created as a result of project activities, but the project's priority needs to be supporting current SBDCs.

Question: Can project activities be provided to SBDCs hosted by public universities in Northern Central American countries?

Response: Project activities cannot benefit the central government nor its universities in Northern Central American countries. Any suggested SBDCs would need to be cleared by WHA/PPC before incorporating them in the project.

Question: I am wanting to know if a small business registered in usa and or Colombia is eligible for this grant?

Response: As noted in on the NOFO cover page and Section C1, domestic and overseas based NGOs, U.S. based Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) or associations, and public international organizations (PIOs) are eligible to apply.

Question: Eligibility of applicants: Are UN organizations eligible to apply?

Response: Organizations that meet the Eligibility criteria under the cover page and Section C are welcome to apply.

Question: Can a Public Benefit Corporation from the United States apply to the grant?

Response: Please refer to the cover sheet and Section C for the organizational eligibility criteria.