**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CARSI NOFO 2024**

Funding Opportunity Number: S-PM070-24-GR-501

Application Period Opens: December 7, 2024

Deadline for Applications: February 15, 2024

Deadline for Questions: January 26, 2024

Total Amount Available: $1,000,000

Award Floor: $250,000

Award Ceiling: $500,000

Anticipated Start Date for Projects: June 1, 2024

**Eligibility Requirements**

*Question 1: Can you apply for this opportunity if your registration in SAM.gov is pending?*

*Answer:* Applicants must be actively registered in Sam.gov to be eligible to apply for this opportunity. Applications that do not have an active registration in SAM.gov will be considered ineligible, and their applications will not be reviewed.

*Question 2: Can a non-profit organization apply to this funding opportunity?*

*Answer:* Yes. All U.S. and non-U.S. NGOs/non-profit organizations may submit a proposal under this funding opportunity. However, they must be registered as NGOs in the country in which they operate and must be registered on SAM.gov.

*Question 3: Must NGOs/universities be registered in Panama in order to be eligible to apply to this funding opportunity?*

*Answer:* All U.S. and non-U.S. NGOs and universities may submit a proposal under this funding opportunity. However, they must be registered as universities and NGOs in the country in which they operate and must be registered on SAM.gov. Please note, however, while entities do not have to be registered in Panama to apply for this funding opportunity, successful proposals will have alliances with relevant Panamanian authorities and local organizations.

*Question 4: We are a non-U.S./non-Panamanian based, for profit. Are we required to be a US-based/Panama-based organization to apply for the funding opportunity?*

*Answer:* Prospective applicants do not need to be U.S. based or based in Panama to apply for this funding opportunity. However, because the projects will be implemented in Panama, successful proposals will include an in-depth understanding of the relevant Panamanian issues and reflect partnerships with local organizations and authorities for successful project implementation.

For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply to this funding opportunity. We seek proposals from NGOs, academic institutions, and Public International Organizations. However, eligible candidates can include as part of their project implementation, funding for technical assistance, which your organization may provide if it has the relevant technical expertise.

*Question 5: Do sub-grantees need an active registration with SAM.gov?*

*Answer:* Yes.

*Question 6: Do contractors need an active registration with SAM.gov?*

*Answer:* Not necessarily. Contractors can be private, for-profit companies, serving your organization as a service provider.

*Question 7: Can a current CARSI grant implementer apply for this round of funding if they are still implementing their grant?*

*Answer:* Yes.

**SAM.gov Registrations**

*Question 1: When registering a non-profit organization in SAM.gov, should we use the individual option or the system option?*

Answer: To register in SAM.gov, you must first create an individual account and then fill out the “Register New Entity” section. For more details about this process, refer to the SAM.gov: Guides for New Applicants, SAM.gov User Guide, and the SAM.gov Steps and Instructions available in the Related Documents tab in Grants.gov or the U.S. Embassy in Panama website.

*Question 2: Are international organizations required to enter Electronic Funds Transfer banking information on Sam.gov?*

International entities registering in SAM are not required to enter banking information for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) on the Financial Information page of the entity registration. Those fields are optional. An international entity may enter banking information for EFT if they use a U.S. financial institution.

*Question 3: How do I know if my SAM.gov registrations is already completed and correct?*

*Answer:* You should be able to search SAM.gov for your organization, and if successful, there should be an "approved" message, or active status. You should have also received a confirmation email when you finished the enrollment process.

**Engaging with Potential Partners**

*Question 1: Can we engage the government (e.g., Ministry of Finance) in activities under Program Objectives, as well as civil society organizations?*

*Answer:* Absolutely. We encourage applicants to form local partnerships and alliances with the relevant Panamanian officials and local civil society organizations. Two of the elements taken into account during the evaluation of proposals are organizational capacity and sustainability, both of which are strengthened by local partnerships and project personnel in Panama. The grant will be awarded to a primary grantee, but that primary grantee can give sub-awards to other organizations, as appropriate, with the purpose of meeting project objectives. However, funding awarded through this grant program cannot be used for law enforcement or to support training for members of law enforcement.

*Question 2: Is it necessary to have an MOU with a Panama government entity to apply for this grant?*

*Answer:* No, an MOU with a Panama government entity is not necessary to apply for a CARSI grant. However, we encourage applicants to form local partnerships and alliances with the relevant Panamanian officials and local civil society organizations.

*Question 3: In which cases is it essential for a project proposal, submitted by a civil service/non-government organization, to have a partnership with government institution?*

*Answer:* There aren’t any parameters established in the NOFO that define when a project requires a partnership or collaboration with a government institution. The need to have a partnership/collaboration with a government institution will depend entirely on the nature of the project. However, because the projects will be implemented in Panama, successful proposals will include partnerships and alliances with institutions necessary to carry out the proposed project successfully.

*Question 4: As we look towards identifying civil society partners, do you have any recommendations for the appropriate criteria for selecting national partners?*

*Answer:* Other than ensuring that the local partner is a legally registered organization with no legal issues regarding project and financial management, we do not have criteria for selecting local civil society partners.

*Question 5: Is it feasible for one of the partners to be a private entity? So, for example a project managed by a university with a partner from the private sector providing technical assistance.*

*Answer:* The organization that is applying for the CARSI funds needs to meet the requirements of eligible candidates, which are - "U.S. non-profit / NGOs, overseas based non-profit / NGOs, institutions of higher education and public international organizations." Only these candidates can apply for CARSI funds. Project proposals, may include technical experts, as necessary, with the purpose of meeting project objectives.

*Question 6: Do CBOs need to have personeria judicia to be counted as a CSO?*

*Answer:* No. CSOs can include community-based organizations as well as non-governmental organizations. CSOs be labor unions, religious groups, Indigenous groups, professional associations, international NGOs, parent teacher associations, civic groups like the Rotary Club.

*Question 7: Will the U.S. Embassy Panama ensure participation of Government Institutions?*

*Answer:* No. The Embassy is the donor. The award recipient is the implementer. As the program implementer, it is the award recipient’s duty to ensure the participation of any institution or group in which they have expressed plans to collaborate within their proposal.

**Application Instructions**

*Question 1: What format must be used in the proposal?*

*Answer:* The NOFO includes the technical format requirements and explains which documents and sections must be included in the proposal submission. Applicants can decide how to format their proposals, as long as they meet the technical formatting and content parameters established by the NOFO. The template that we provide in the Supporting Documents is a guide that applicants can use to develop their proposal. It incorporates most of the requirements set out in the NOFO along with several other areas that are considered in the evaluation of applications. However, the use of the template, as a whole or in part, is completely optional.

*Question 2: What does “Anticipated Start Date for Projects” mean?*

*Answer:* We anticipate that the projects funded through this NOFO will be starting on June 1, 2024. CARSI awards funds for projects with defined periods of implementation. Every proposal must define the number of months it will require to implement the project, but all of the projects will start on June 1, 2024.

*Question 3: When can project activities start? Will expenses incurred before the official start of the project be reimbursed?*

*Answer:* CARSI grants can be used during a defined period of implementation. This period starts on June 1, 2024 and goes forth from there. Grantees and project implementers must not start project activities or incur in expenses before the project’s official start date. Expenses incurred before the official start of the period of implementation will not be reimbursed.

*Question 4: Regarding the attachments, the NOFO states that we are allowed a total of 9 pages, and can use pages up to 9 pages of “additional optional attachments” such as letters of support. Are we able to use more than two pages for Letters of Support, as long as, we stay within the total 9-page limit?*

*Answer:* Yes. The 9-page limitation is provided since we recognize that one or two more of the required document contents in the section “Attachments” may require additional pages. As long as you stay within the 9-page limitation, yes, you may use more than 2 pages for “Letters of Support.” Please remember that the content for pages 5-7 includes more than just letters of support – it extends to MOUs or additional project timeline information.

*Question 5: Could you please clarify the page limit for attachments such as “Roles and Responsibilities of Key Project Personnel” and “Timeline”? Could you also please confirm that, overall, the page limit is 9 pages for all attachments?*

*Answer:* The “Attachments” section should not exceed 9 pages. We have estimated the following:

▪ Monitoring Plan: may be 1-2 pages

▪ Roles & Responsibilities: about 1 page

▪ Timeline: about 1 page

▪ Optional information to include: 2-3 pages

The above totals 7 pages, but given that certain attachments may require additional space, such as for “roles and responsibilities, letters of support, etc., the applicant may use up to 9 pages for any attachments they are submitting.

*Question 6: Referring to the project timeline that can be provided as an attachment to the proposal, should it include long term effects/activities foreseen to happen after the end of the project – specifically as it relates to sustainability and multiplier effect?*

*Answer:* The project timeline can be limited to the activities that will take place during the project’s period of implementation. However, we encourage applicants to address sustainability and multiplier effect in the project description section of the proposal.

*Question 7: On the SF-424, should fields 5a. Applicant Identifier and 5b. Federal Entity Identifier be left blank?*

*Answer:* Yes, fields 5a. and 5b. of the SF-424 should be left blank. For more detailed instructions on how to fill out the SF-424 and SF-424A refer to TAB D of the NOFO.

*Question 8: Should all proposal forms be submitted through Grants.gov (i.e. cover sheet, excel budget sheet, project proposal template, SF-424 form)? Do we fill forms online or do we upload attachments?*

*Answer:* The complete proposal, forms included, should be submitted through grants.gov. The grants.gov system allows applicants to fill out the SF-424 and SF424A forms online and upload the rest of the proposal. For more information about applying to grants through grants.gov refer to the Grants.gov Online Help page: <https://www.grants.gov/help/html/help/index.htm#t=GetStarted%2FGetStarted.htm>.

*Question 9: Can the proposal be submitted via email?*

*Answer:* The complete proposal, forms included, should be submitted through grants.gov. No documents or forms should be submitted through email.

*Question 10: Once an application is started through grants.gov - can it be saved and returned to?*

*Answer:* Once an application is started through grants.gov, it can be saved and returned to at a later point.

*Question 11: The SF-424 form is an editable format. However, the cover sheet and project proposal are not. Is this something I do directly within the Grants.gov system?*

*Answer:* The SF-424 forms can be filled out directly through grants.gov. The rest of the documents can be uploaded into the Grants.gov application page. Applicants are encouraged to submit multiple documents in a single Microsoft Word file (i.e., Cover Sheet, Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Proposal Narrative and Budget Narrative). There is a Word version of Cover Letter and an Excel version of the Budget Worksheet in grants.gov, under the Related Documents tab, that can be downloaded and edited.

*Question 12: The application package in Grants.gov doesn’t list some of the required documents in the application, such as the cover letter. I only have the templates included in the application links. What should I do?*

*Answer:* The package in Grants.gov only includes standard sections. Applicants are encouraged to submit multiple documents in a single Microsoft Word file (i.e., Cover Sheet, Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Proposal Narrative and Budget Narrative). Alternatively, documents not listed in the grants.gov package but requested in the NOFO can be included as Attachments and will not count towards the Attachment page limit. There is a Word version of Cover Letter and an Excel version of the Budget Worksheet in grants.gov, under the Related Documents tab, that can be downloaded and edited.

*Question 13: I'm logged into the Grants.gov and looking at the NOFO, however the "apply" button is inactive. What do I need to do to activate the apply button?*

*Answer:* Individual user accounts in Grants.gov need to be affiliated to an organization and have the appropriate “role” designation to apply to funding opportunities. It’s likely you do not have the appropriate role designation to initiate applications for funding opportunities. We suggest you contact your organization’s Grants.gov account administrator for more details. For more information on applying to grants through Grants.gov refer to the Grants.gov Online Help: https://www.grants.gov/help/html/help/index.htm#t=GetStarted%2FGetStarted.htm or contact the Grants.gov Support Line at 1-800-518-4726.

*Question 14: How many pages are allowed in the Attachments section?*

*Answer:* 9 pages.

*Question 15: Is it possible to vary the number of pages in each Annex as long as it is 9 pages or less?*

*Answer:* Yes.

*Question 16: In my proposal, should I reference the NOFO objectives or pillars from the Root Causes Strategy?*

*Answer:* The Root Causes are broad, and the NOFO only supports some of them. Use the objectives in the NOFO because they are more specific.

*Question 17: Should the proposal include letters and/or MOUs from the intended partners – governmental institutions and CSOs?*

*Answer:* Letters and/or MOUs from key implementing partners – either governmental or non-governmental – strengthen the proposal and demonstrate the commitment of key implementing partners. These attachments do not count against the page limits.

*Question 18: Can you share the Proposal Submission Instructions?*

*Answer:* This reference is an error. Please disregard.

*Question 19: The NOFO lists, among others, the following required indicators: "Number of government service providers and civil society organizations that reduce corruption opportunities in service provision.” If the applicant is not focused on 'service provision' per se, does the applicant still need to include this indicator? Similarly, if the applicant's activities are focused on civil society organizations, does the required indicator "Total number of civil servants having received training" need to be included?*

*Answer:* You do not need to include this indicator.

*Question 20: 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?*

*Answer:* It is not required to submit resumes or CVs. SAM.gov registration and a UEI suffice as your organization’s legal status. The page limit does not count towards attachments—MOUs would not count against your page limit.

*Question 21: For "Attachments", could you please confirm that the total number of pages allowed is 9 pages total, and not 7 pages?*

*Answer:* There is no page limit for attachments.

*Question 22: Is the attachment “Roles and responsibilities of key project personnel” limited to one page? Or can it be longer as long as it fits within the 9-page limit for attachments?*

*Answer:* It can be longer if it fits within the page limit.

*Question 23: Page 9 of the NOFO states "International applicants must include collaboration with domestic organizations and institutions." Could you please clarify if 'collaboration' means providing a subaward to a domestic organization or institution?*

*Answer:* It means subgrants, subawards, and MOUs.

**Miscellaneous**

*Question 1: Can a civil service or non-government organization focus on any of the funding opportunity objectives?*

*Answer: A* civil service or non-governmental organization can submit an application focused on any of the objectives outlined in the NOFO.

*Question 2: Do you have any preferred contractors for translating documents and simultaneous translation in Panama?*

*Answer:* The Embassy does not have any preferred contractors.

*Question 3: How many projects can be submitted by each ONG?*

*Answer:* Applicants can submit more than one proposal. However, any successful applicant will only have one proposal approved. Your NGO should consider whether it’s best to submit one competitive proposal or submitting more than one. The CARSI proposal review tends to be a competitive process.

*Question 4: Is Panama a USAID recipient country?*

*Answer:* Panama is not a USAID recipient country

*Question 5: Will the selected recipients of the awards need to finance the initial phase of the project?*

*Answer:* Award payments can be processed after the period of implementation has begun and the mechanism for payments has been established. Award recipients can request an advance to start project activities, or they can start the project and then request a reimbursement. Approval for advances is at the discretion of the Grants Officer. Usually, payments associated to CARSI grants are done in installments, throughout the life of the grant, as reimbursements.

*Question 6: Do you accept unsolicited proposals?*

*Answer:* Unsolicited proposals can be submitted to the Embassy. However, organizations should consider that most funding opportunities at the Embassy are advertised through NOFOs with specific objectives and application timelines. Applications for CARSI awards are only accepted and reviewed on an annual basis, usually between the March and June, as defined by each year’s NOFO.

*Question 7: Can CARSI funds be used to facilitate improved effectiveness in the sanctioning of cases leveraging coordination between law enforcement institutions?*

*Answer:* The funding awarded under this NOFO could be used to facilitate improved effectiveness in the sanctioning of cases leveraging coordination between law enforcement institutions.

*Question 8: Can CARSI funds be used for capacity building directed at judges, judiciary advisors, prosecutors, to enable effective processing and sanctioning?*

*Answer:* The funding awarded under this NOFO could be used for capacity building directed at judges, judiciary advisors and prosecutors, to enable effective processing and sanctioning.

*Question 9: Can CARSI funds be used to train law enforcement officers?*

*Answer:* CARSI funds cannot be used for law enforcement or to train law enforcement officers.

*Question 10: We’ve been reviewing the guidelines and observed you are not requiring an SOI. Based on this, could an NGO/university submit more than one proposal or is there a requirement of only one proposal per NGO/university?*

*Answer:* The CARSI grants application process does not require a Statement of Interest (SOI). Applicants can submit more than one proposal. However, only one award will be granted per applicant.

*Question 11: Will I be able to ask questions about the process/forms related to the NOFO after the deadline for questions?*

*Answer:* The deadline for questions is January 26, 2024, 5PM EST. We will not be able to answer questions related to the NOFO or the application process/forms after then.

*Question 12: To demonstrate experience managing larger funds, can the contractor’s experience be used?*

*Answer:* No. The contractor is contracted to do a task, not to manage the award.

*Question 13: To demonstrate experience managing larger funds, can the subgrantee’s experience be used?*

*Answer:* Yes. They are an implementing partner of the award.

END OF DOCUMENT

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