Pre-Award Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for 2015 COPS Anti-Heroin Task Force (AHTF) Program

Getting Started

Q: What is the purpose of COPS Anti-Heroin Task Force (AHTF) Program funding?

A: AHTF is a competitive grant program that provides funding directly to state law enforcement agencies in states with high rates of primary treatment admissions for heroin and other opioids. Funds awarded in this program shall be used for investigative purposes to locate or investigate illicit activities, including activities related to the distribution of heroin or unlawful distribution of prescription opioids.

Q: Is AHTF an open solicitation?

A: Yes. State law enforcement agencies authorized by law or by a state agency to engage in or to supervise anti-heroin and other opioids investigative activities such as locating and investigating illicit activities, including activities related to the distribution of heroin or unlawful distribution of prescriptive opioids, are eligible to apply.

Q: What is my username?

A: In the new COPS Office Agency Portal, your username is the log-in e-mail address you used to set up your account. At that time, you also established a 12-character password for logging into the COPS Office Online Account Access site. If you need assistance in accessing the site, you may contact the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770 for assistance.

Q: How does my agency obtain its password if it is lost or forgotten?

A: To obtain your password, click on the "Account Access" link on the COPS Office website. The logon page has a "Reset Password" link that will ask you to enter your username, and if an account is recognized, you will receive an e-mail with a link and instructions on how to rebuild your password.

Q: I do not know my agency's ORI number; how can I obtain it?

A: If you've had grants with the COPS Office before and do not know your ORI number, please contact the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770, and a representative will be able to look up your ORI number.

Q: My agency does not have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number; how do I get one?

A: All applicants must have a DUNS number prior to submitting an application for COPS Office funding. A DUNS number is a unique nine- or thirteen-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for

identifying and tracking entities receiving federal funds. To get a DUNS number, please call 866-705-5711 or visit www.dnb.com/us.

Q: My System for Award Management (SAM) registration is about to expire; how do I renew it?

A: All applicants for federal financial assistance must be registered in the SAM database prior to submitting an application for COPS Office funding. The SAM database is the repository for standard information about federal financial assistance applicants, recipients, and subrecipients. Applicants must maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during the grant application process. If awarded, you must also maintain the currency of your information in the SAM database until you submit the final financial report or receive the final payment under this grant, whichever is later. This requires that you review and update your information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required by changes in your information or another award term. If you have an active SAM registration that is set to expire before September 30, 2015, you must renew your SAM registration before completing the application. To verify the expiration date of your SAM registration, please visit www.sam.gov.

Q: What software is recommended to complete my AHTF application in the COPS Office Online Application System?

A: For best results with the COPS Office website, we recommend Internet Explorer version 11. When using Internet Explorer 11, users should add the COPS Office website to the Compatibility View settings in the browser by following the instructions found at www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/Compatibility-IE11.pdf or contacting the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Q: Can I print out a blank AHTF application so I can see it on paper first?

A: Yes. The COPS Office website has provided a link to a PDF version of the application for agencies to use for reference only. To access the PDF version of the application, please go to the COPS Office website at www.cops.usdoj.gov and click on the “Grants and Funding” link. Once you access the grants and funding page, click the link for “COPS Anti-Heroin Task Force program” and a copy of the application will be posted there. As a reminder, applications are accepted online via the COPS Office website. The PDF version of the application serves as a reference document only and should not be used to submit your application. Please note that not all fields in the printed PDF version of the application are required; the required fields will be specified in the online application.

Q: Should any other documents be printed in preparation to complete the AHTF application?

A: Yes. Applicants should also print the section 13 Project Narrative and Budget Narrative forms to view the required questions. To access this PDF form, please go to the COPS Office website at www.cops.usdoj.gov and click on the "Grants and Funding" link. Once you access the grants and funding page, click the link for the "COPS Anti-Heroin Task Force Program" and a copy of the section 13 Project Narrative and Budget Narrative forms will be posted there. There is also a link to the section 13 Project Narrative and Budget Narrative forms within the Standard Application PDF version and the AHTF Application Guide.

Q: Is there any way to print the finished application so that I can review a hard copy prior to submission?

A: Yes. Before submitting the application on the last page of the online application, you will be able to print a copy for review; you will be able to print the entire application or individual sections. After submission, you will also be able to print the entire completed application.

Q: How much time do I have before the application times out?

A: The applications will time out after 20 minutes of inactivity. If your application times out, you will only lose the current page of data. It is advisable to click the "Save" button once you complete each page of the application. This will prevent you from losing data in the event your application is timed out. You will only be able to save pages that are completely filled out.

Allowable Costs Under AHTF

Q: What may my agency request funding for under the AHTF grant program?

A: Agencies may request funding to pay for the following:

- Personnel and fringe benefits
    - New civilian personnel to work directly on anti-heroin and other opioids investigation activities
    - New entry level sworn personnel to work directly on anti-heroin and other opioids investigation activities; however, agencies may elect to redeploy locally funded sworn personnel to engage in AHTF activities and assign newly hired AHTF-funded officers to backfill their positions
- Equipment directly related to anti-heroin and other opioids investigation activities
- Supplies directly related to anti-heroin and other opioids investigation activities
- Travel/Training directly related to anti-heroin and other opioids investigation activities
- Contracts/Consultants directly related to anti-heroin and other opioids investigation activities
- Other costs, including overtime for sworn officers engaging in anti-heroin and other opioids investigation activities

AHTF will only pay for costs not already funded in the applicant's local budget. Please refer to the AHTF Application Guide for a nonexhaustive list of allowable and unallowable costs.

Q: May AHTF funding be used to fund treatment programs or prosecution of heroin and other opioids related activities?

A: No. Agencies may only request funding for cost directly related to anti-heroin and other opioids investigative activities.

Q: May AHTF funding be used to fund overtime for sworn officers?

A: Yes. Agencies may request funding for overtime for sworn officers engaging in anti-heroin and other opioids investigation activities under the Other Costs budget category.

Q: What is the maximum amount to be awarded per award?

A: Each award will be capped at $1.5 million.

Q: Is there a match requirement?

A: No. There is no local match.

Q: How long is the award period for AHTF?

A: AHTF is a two-year (24-month) grant program. All budget requests must not exceed this two-year period.

Q: May AHTF funding be used to rehire sworn officers previously employed by our agency?

A: Yes. Officers previously employed by your agency may be rehired using AHTF grant funds, but funding requests must be limited to your agency's entry level salary and benefits.

Q: May AHTF funding be used to fill sworn officer positions that are vacant at the time we apply for AHTF funding?

A: No. Officers funded with AHTF grant funds must be in addition to any officers funded in your agency's local budget. However, AHTF funding may be used to fill vacant sworn officer positions if the positions are unfunded in the law enforcement budget (i.e., state, local, or BIA funding has not been budgeted to pay for the salary and benefits costs of the positions) because of a hiring freeze or budget cuts due to local fiscal distress.

Preparing Your Application

Q: For the narrative sections, does the 4,000-character limit include spaces and special characters, or just letters?

A: Yes, the 4,000-character limit includes letters, numbers, spaces, and special characters.

Q: What documents are required to be uploaded to our application in the COPS Office Online Application System?

A: In addition to completing the SF-424 and COPS Attachment to the SF-424, applicants are required to upload as attachments (1) a project narrative description and (2) a budget narrative description. These documents must be uploaded to section 13 in the COPS Office Online Application System. Any application that does not include these two documents will be determined as incomplete and will be removed from consideration.

Q: What is the deadline for this solicitation?

A: Applications for this program require a two-step process. It is strongly recommended that applicants complete the SF-424through the Grants.gov website as soon as possible. The SF-424 is a government-wide standard application for federal assistance. Once the SF-424 has been submitted via www.grants.gov, the COPS Office will send an invitation e-mail to the applicant with instructions on completing the second part of the AHTF application process through the COPS Office Online Application System (see "Registration" and "How to Apply" sections of the AHTF Application Guide). If you have not renewed your COPS Office Account Access information, contact the COPS Office Response Center at AskCopsRC@usdoj.gov or 800-421-6770. *An application is not considered submitted until both of these steps are completed.* Complete application packages for the AHTF 2015 solicitation are due by **June 19, 2015, 7:59 p.m. EDT.**

Budget-Related Questions

Q. What are allowable fringe benefits?

A. In addition to Social Security, Medicare, health insurance, life insurance, vacation (enter value for line item only if funds are not included in the base salary listed above), sick leave (enter value for line item only if funds are not included in the base salary listed above), retirement, Worker's Compensation, and unemployment insurance, the following are allowable fringe benefits: (1) dental insurance, (2) vision insurance, (3) prescription drugs, (4) holiday pay, (5) disability insurance, (6) accidental death and disability, (7) 401(k) plan, (8) liability insurance, (9) shift differential payments, (10) accident insurance, (11) bonding insurance, (12) Police Trust, (13) state funded retirement system, (14) professional liability insurance, (15) Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) tax, and (16) survivor benefit. Other benefits, such as severance pay, hazard pay, etc., are not allowed. The COPS Office will not pay for any fringe

benefits not listed, and if your agency pays those benefits for locally funded officer positions, your agency will be required to do so for AHTF-funded officer positions with local funds.

Q: How do I determine the health care and fringe benefits costs for my agency?

A: An agency should contact its Human Resources/Benefits Office to help determine their costs for healthcare and fringe benefits.

Q: How should an agency calculate the first-year salary and benefit package of officers who will be recruits promoted to sworn officer positions, given that a recruit and sworn officer fall under different pay and benefit levels?

A: The first-year salary and benefits package should cover the "blend" of both the recruitment academy and the postgraduation amounts, with the sworn officer salary and benefits amount used to cover the salaries and benefits of the officer post-graduation.

Q: My agency has officers who are exempt from Social Security benefit deductions. How should I address this in the AHTF application?

A: Agencies that have officers that are exempt from Social Security benefit deductions should check the "Exempt" option on the application. By checking "Exempt," the agency is not required to submit additional information.

Q: Are indirect costs allowable under the AHTF grant?

A: No, AHTF does not pay for any indirect costs.

Q: If awarded funding from the AHTF grant program, will our agency be obligated to keep the total number of officers on staff at the time the grant was awarded?

A: To comply with the nonsupplanting requirement of the AHTF grant, the grantee must maintain its locally funded sworn force baseline and any planned increases of officer positions during the grant award period.

Nonsupplanting requirement

Q: Does the nonsupplanting requirement apply to the AHTF grant program?

A: Yes. The nonsupplanting requirement is a legal requirement in the Public Safety and Community Policing Act, which is the COPS Office's authorizing statute. The nonsupplanting requirement means COPS Office grant funds must be used to supplement (not replace) state, local, or Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funds that would have been dedicated toward law enforcement if federal funding had not been awarded. As it applies to your agency's AHTF grant, grantees must not reduce the level of state, local, or BIA funding that would have been dedicated toward any hiring or procurement as a result of receiving federal funding.

AHTF funding and other COPS Office grants

Q: May our agency request funding under AHTF if we have an active COPS Office hiring grant for sworn officer positions?

A: Yes. Agencies with an active COPS Office hiring grant are not disqualified from applying for an AHTF grant, but the AHTF-funded position(s) must be over and above the number of officer positions funded in the agency's local budget and under any other COPS Office hiring grant.

Q: May AHTF funding be used to retain officers hired under other COPS Office hiring programs?

A: No. AHTF grant funding may not be used to comply with the retention requirement of your other COPS Office hiring grants. Instead, your agency must use state, local, or tribal funding to retain the COPS Office-funded positions for the required retention period following the conclusion of the grant period. In addition, the retained officer position(s) must be over and above your agency's locally funded sworn force and any full-time sworn positions awarded under the AHTF grant.

Retention requirement

Q: Is there a retention requirement for officers hired under AHTF?

A: No. There is **no** retention requirement for officers hired using AHTF funding. However, awardees will be subject to the nonsupplanting requirement.

Other Questions

Q: What is the formula for disbursing these AHTF grant funds?

A: AHTF is not a "formula" grant program. All applications will be reviewed based on their answers to the statewide primary treatment admission data for heroin and other opioids, community policing plan, project plan, multijurisdictional approach and collaborations, and other relevant factors determined by the COPS Office. Awards will be made on a competitive basis.

Q: How does an agency verify their application was received?

A: Agencies should log back in to the "Account Access" page on the COPS Office website and click on the "AHTF" link to access their application and verify that their application was submitted and received by the COPS Office before the application deadline (the current application status will be "Completed and submitted"). Agencies whose applications were not received by the COPS Office before the deadline will receive a message in red stating that the application deadline has passed and they will not be able to proceed further.

Q: When should I expect notification if awarded AHTF grant funds?

A: The COPS Office anticipates making AHTF grant award announcements prior to September 30, 2015.

Questions? Please call the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.