

Pre-Award Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for 2019 COPS Office Anti-Heroin Task Force (AHTF) Program

Getting Started

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

A: The AHTF is a competitive award program designed to advance public safety by providing funds to locate or investigate illicit activities, through statewide collaboration, related to the distribution of heroin, fentanyl, or carfentanil 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, fentanyl, carfentanil, and other opioids investigative activities, such as locating and investigating illicit activities, including activities related to the distribution of heroin, fentanyl, carfentanil, or unlawful distribution of prescription opioids, are eligible to apply.

Q: What is my username?

A: In the new COPS Office Agency Portal, your username is the login 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 awards 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 award 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 award, 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, 2018, 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 versions 9, 10, or 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 <https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/Compatibility-IE11.pdf> for contacting the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

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

A: Yes. Applicants should 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 Office 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 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 award 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
 - 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
 - Funding requests are not limited to your agency's entry-level salary and benefits. AHTF award funds will pay for experience level salaries as reflected in your agency's approved pay-scale.
- 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 costs directly related to anti-heroin and other opioids investigative activities. However, we do encourage applicants to pursue collaboration with agencies involved with treatment, prevention and even prosecution. Collaborative work by public safety and public health can not only improve the outcome of investigations, but can help bridge the gap between overdose and treatment. As an example, local law enforcement agencies have stepped up across the United States to implement protocols to transition overdose victims to treatment programs provided by the public health sector. It has also laid the groundwork for accurate assessment of drug trends which is critical to strategic deployment of investigative resources.

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: May AHTF funding be used to fund overtime for civilian positions?

A: No. Civilian overtime is not an allowable cost.

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

A: Each award will be capped at \$3 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) award 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 funds.

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 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 character limit include spaces and special characters, or just letters?

A: Yes, the 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-424 through 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 2018 solicitation are due by **August 2, 2019 at 7:59 p.m. EDT.**

Q: What should be included in the Project Narrative?

A: In addition to ensuring that all elements identified in the Project Narrative instructions are addressed, applicants should include overdose data, coroner/medical examiner death investigations data, and any other available data that would support your agency’s proposal.

Certification of Compliance with 8 U.S.C. 1373

All State or local government entity applicants (e.g., police departments, sheriff’s departments, state police) are required to certify compliance with 8 U.S.C. § 1373 regarding prohibitions or restrictions on sending to, requesting or receiving from, maintaining, or exchanging information on citizenship or immigration status, including any prohibitions or restrictions imposed or established by a State or local government entity or official.

This certification must be completed by the governing body’s chief legal officer. The Chief Legal Officer is the primary/highest ranking attorney for the governing body that governs any state or local law enforcement applicant (e.g., City Attorney, County Attorney, State Attorney General) or for the entity that is applying for funds and will make subawards to a State or local government entity (e.g., General Counsel for a non-profit organization that will make subawards to a City or County). (Please note that the Certification may not be completed by a law enforcement agency attorney – the Chief Legal Officer must represent the governing body.)

Set up a new user and roles in the COPS Office Agency Portal at www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=2450. Establish accounts for the law enforcement executive (LE)/program official (PO), government executive (GE)/ financial official (FO), and chief legal officer (CLO).

Set up an e-signature in the COPS Office Agency Portal at www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=2450. Establish an electronic signature for all officials (LE/PO, GE/FO, and CLO). This is critical as it enables your agency to sign important documents in the application process.

We strongly recommend notifying your governing body's chief legal counsel of this certification requirement as soon as the AHTF application period opens so that they may conduct the required reviews necessary for completing the certification before the application deadline.

Questions regarding the certification requirement may be directed to the COPS Office Legal Division at 202-514-3456.

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: Are fringe benefits allowable for requested overtime costs?

A: Yes, but the only fringe benefits allowable for requested overtime compensation are FICA, Worker's Compensation, and unemployment insurance. The COPS Office will not pay for any other fringe benefits for requested overtime costs. If your agency pays for additional benefits for officer overtime, then your agency will be required to do so with local funds.

Q: Are subawards allowed under the AHTF program?

A: No, subawards are not an allowable cost under this program,

Q: Are academy costs allowed under the AHTF program?

A: No, academy costs are unallowable under this program.

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 health care 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 be the sworn officer salary 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 award?

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

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

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

Nonsupplanting requirement

Q: Does the nonsupplanting requirement apply to the AHTF 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 award 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 award, recipients 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 awards

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

A: Yes. Agencies with an active COPS Office hiring award are not disqualified from applying for an AHTF award, 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 award.

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

A: No. AHTF funding may not be used to comply with the retention requirement of your other COPS Office hiring awards. 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 award 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 award.

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, recipients will be subject to the nonsupplanting requirement.

Other Questions

Q: What is the formula for disbursing AHTF award funds?

A: AHTF is not a "formula" award program. All applications will be reviewed based on the information provided in the project and budget narratives; the statewide primary treatment admission data for heroin, fentanyl, carfentanil, and other opioids; 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 funding?

A: The COPS Office anticipates making AHTF award announcements prior to September 30, 2019.

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