

PACIFIC ISLAND HEALTH OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Request for Proposals

Strengthening Health Agency Capacities and Systems in Select US-Affiliated Pacific Islands for Improved Strategic Resource Management

GRADE/CLASSIFICATION: Consultancy, Temporary

PROJECT PERIOD: Variable and as needed between 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017

RFP Submission Deadline: Immediate

BACKGROUND: The six US-affiliated Pacific Islands (USAPIs) of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Republic of Palau (Palau), Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and American Samoa (AS) face a range of challenges around effective and strategic resource management capacities and capabilities. Despite their association with the US, most of the USAPIs have highly constrained economies and limited private sector development, with heavy reliance on US federal funding to support core public education and health services. In the US territories of Guam, CNMI and AS, US-federal grants support significant portions of core public health programs; while in the US Freely Associated States (FAS) of the FSM, RMI and Palau, this translates to an even higher portion of public health programs funded through their respective Compact Agreements with the US, US-federal grants, as well as funding from other external/international sources from foreign countries, development/technical agencies, and international development banks. This dependency leaves most of the USAPIs highly vulnerable to US domestic and global economic trends, and donor-driven priorities. In addition, there have been on-going challenges with effective, timely and efficient use of available external/federal funds, evidenced by chronic under-spending of available project/grant funds over the life cycle of a grant/project.

Variables attributing to this vary from location to location, but include:

- Highly bureaucratic and burdensome fiscal management systems;
- Insufficient coordination and harmonization of budgets across different funding sources covering similar or the same grant/program outlays, and in relation to overall health budgets;
- Insufficient tracking of grant/program financial transactions against agreed work plans and budgets for timely monitoring of fiscal performance and application of corrective actions;
- Inconsistent or unclear lines of authority and communication between and amongst program and financial management staff;
- Insufficiently trained and staffed finance and program offices; and
- Lack of, adherence to, or understanding of government financial management systems, and fiscal policies and procedures, including US federal and other external funding rules and regulations.

In the past few years, these issues have culminated in growing concerns by both the US federal government and other donor/development agencies on the poor utilization of grant/donor funds, despite increasing public demand and need for services.

Project Purpose and Strategies: From 2013 to the present, the Pacific Islands Health Officers Association (PIHOA) acquired funding from the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), through its cooperative agreement with the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), to implement its project – *Strengthening SRM Capacities and Systems in the USAPIs*. The overall objectives of the project are to improve the knowledge and skills of identified USAPI health agency finance and program staff, and to strengthen relevant systems and policies to ensure: 1) cost-effective and equitable coordination, budgeting and allocation of external financial sources aligned with health agency global budgets and strategic plans; 2) timely, efficient, and accurate tracking, monitoring/analysis, and reporting of financial transactions and performance, and execution of corrective actions; and 3) timely spend-down of US federal awards/grants. For the purposes of this RFP, strategic resource management (SRM) is defined as the coordinated planning, mobilization, and management of resources to ensure equitable and impactful distribution/allocation of such resources that sufficiently meet healthcare needs and health agency priorities.

Under the current phase of PIHOA’s SRM project, expected tasks under this RFP will be to work with and assist participating USAPIs health agencies to map and assess the following:

- 1) All health agency grants management processes from start to finish, including central ministries/departments of finance where relevant;
- 2) Each step from budget development to execution of quote, requisitions, purchase orders, and federal drawdowns, including average processing times at all levels to identify specific bottlenecks;
- 3) Personnel and procurement systems that impact effective financial grants management and spend-down;
- 4) Available grants and financial management policies, SOPs, and related operational manuals, including staffing and systems capabilities and capacities; and
- 5) All grant revenue and whether there is alignment with the health agency’s global operating budget; and
- 6) Whether grant management processes adhere to funding agency rules and regulations and allowable cost principles.

It is expected that a comprehensive assessment report of all the findings will be developed, including action-oriented list of recommendations, key tasks, and training and systems improvements requirements. It is expected that feedback from local health agency and finance counterparts will be solicited for further refinement of the report and recommendations, and, ultimately, final approval. If warranted, another RFP may be solicited to implement all or a portion of the recommended actions, tasks and training/systems improvement requirements, but will be contingent on health agency approval and available funding.

RFP Submission: PIHOA invites RFP proposals, outlining the following:

- Tools, methodologies, and approaches to mapping and assessing grants and financial management processes which will include minimum of two-three weeks’ on-site assessment,

and a minimum of another 2 weeks of report writing, feedback solicitation, and report finalization;

- Demonstrated experience in developing and refining grants management policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs);
- Demonstrated competencies in finance and accounting, with intimate understanding of GAAP, US federal cost principles, and fund accounting systems (preferably MIP or similar fund accounting software);
- Demonstrated experience doing grants and financial management improvement work in one or more of the USAPIs;
- Ability and availability to travel for any length of time to a US territory, or US freely associated state, including to multiple locations, if warranted; and
- Daily consultancy rate appropriate to the tasks outlined above and required qualifications and background to ensure high quality work and report product.

Please also submit a CV or resume, including three professional references. PIHOA will cover all required travel and associated travel costs during on-site work, and need not be included into the RFP submission.

Please send submissions to: admin@pihoa.org, ATTN: Emi Chutaró