



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
VIRTUAL FELLOWS PROGRAM
PROJECT DESCRIPTION – WHA/CEN**



This project seeks a Virtual Fellow to serve with the **Bureau of Western Hemisphere's Office of Central American Affairs (WHA/CEN)**, as a **Policy Analyst**.

Fellow Location: Virtually from Fellow's home or office. This unpaid, virtual position is a non-sensitive one. The Fellow will serve virtually as a consultant and will not be physically located at the Department of State.

Project Name: Addressing the Tax Revenue Shortfall in Central American Countries – a Systematic Analytical Review and Policy Recommendations

Project Description:

The Virtual Fellow will:

- Review, analyze, summarize, and compile existing research on the following issues (using information from World Bank, IMF, IDB (Inter-American Development Bank), Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA), Central American Integration System (SICA) and other academic research sources.);
 - Identify key reasons why tax collection as a percentage of GDP is low in three Central American countries: Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador; what are the primary obstacles to effective tax collection? Is there sufficient political will to address this issue in each country?
 - Identify efforts these governments are taking to address this problem; evaluate their effectiveness on a country by country basis;
 - Highlight existing best practices in the field of revenue collection in the region or elsewhere in the developing world. Which programs work the best? How can the international community support best practices?
- Draft paper with analysis and policy recommendations in regular coordination with WHA-CEN on progress;
- Present paper with analysis and policy recommendations in a video presentation to Department of State personnel at the end of the project.

Background: Central American countries have some of the lowest tax collection rates as a percentage of GDP in the Western Hemisphere and in the world. Many governments in the region routinely suffer budget shortfalls due to low tax revenues and outsized demands for services, leading them to rely heavily on international donor support. Increased government revenue, if used effectively, can allow Central American governments to provide needed services for their citizens, improve governance, and expand citizen security.

Program Requirements: The precepts of the Virtual Fellows Program call for Fellows to have a high degree of administrative, professional, or technical knowledge/experience and a minimum of five years of professional experience that is directly applicable to the assigned task.

Project-specific Knowledge, Skills, or Abilities:

- Recommended Spanish reading ability to review source documents/research from the region;
- Economic and/or Public Administration background either from work or academia. General familiarity with budget and revenue issues preferred;
- Strong writing background and expertise;
- Effective Interpersonal skills;
- Experience and access to MS Word/PowerPoint/Excel.

Clearance: The Fellow must be a U.S. citizen and must receive a Public Trust determination prior to starting his/her service. The Virtual Fellows Program staff will work with the accepted candidate to obtain the Public Trust determination. (Note: A Public Trust determination or other clearance is NOT required prior to applying to be a Virtual Fellow on this project.)

Remuneration: The Virtual Fellow will be appointed to the federal civil service as an intermittent, unpaid consultant. The Department assumes no responsibility for providing any salary or benefits to the Fellow in connection with his/her participation in the Program.