

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

2023 FOREIGN AFFAIRS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (FAIT) FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)
2023 FOREIGN AFFAIRS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (FAIT)
FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

Section A. Funding Opportunity Description

Announcement Type:	New
Funding Title:	2023 Foreign Affairs Information Technology (FAIT) Fellowship Program
Assistance Instrument type:	Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number:	SFOP0008698
Funding Type:	Discretionary
Assistance Listing Number:	19.205
Funding Amount:	\$2,400,000
Funding Authority:	Department of State Basic Authorities
Source of Funding:	Diplomatic Programs
Funding Activity Category:	Education
Cost-Sharing Requirement:	Not Required
Number of Awards:	One award
Project Duration:	38 months
Key Dates:	1. Application must be submitted by 11.59 P.M. Eastern Standard Time (EDT) on May 9, 2022 2. Questions must be submitted by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Standard Time (EDT) on April 26, 2022 3. Notification of winning proposal expected by mid-June 2022
Application Submission:	Application must be submitted through www.grants.gov
Electronic Requirement:	Yes
Eligibility Category:	U.S. non-profit/nongovernmental organizations subject to section 501 (c) (3) of the U. S. tax code and U.S. institutions of higher education (public and private). Eligible applicants must provide proof of their 501(c) (3) eligibility status, as determined by the Internal Revenue Service. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.400, it is a U.S. Department of State policy not to award profit under federal assistance instruments.
Type of Applicant:	Organizations only. Individuals are not eligible to apply
Number of Applications:	One (1) per applicant organization

Executive Summary:

The Bureau of Global Talent Management, Office of Talent Acquisition (GTM/TAC) at the U.S. Department of State (DOS) announces this Notice of Funding Opportunity (“NOFO”) for the 2023 Foreign Affairs IT (FAIT) Fellowship Program. A cooperative agreement for up to \$2,400,000 U.S. Dollars (USD) in FY 2022 Diplomatic Programs Funds will be awarded, pending availability of funds, for work that will support programmatic, financial and administrative activities for the 2023 Foreign Affairs IT (FAIT) Fellowship Program to include outreach, facilitating and assisting in the selection of fellows, tracking and monitoring of fellows, maintaining databases and statistics related to the program, program and financial reporting requirements, financial disbursements, travel, lodging and logistical arrangements. The Recipient will designate dedicated staff to serve as liaisons with GTM/TAC on all aspects of these programs. The Recipient will need to be attentive and responsive to the needs of the fellows and those of the Department. The Recipient will need to demonstrate dedication and commitment in pursuing the goals of the programs.

This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov and may be amended. Answers to questions from eligible interested organizations will be posted as attachments to this NOFO. Applicants should regularly check the www.grants.gov website for the most recent information pertaining to this funding opportunity.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application package has been received by www.grants.gov in its **entirety**; there are steps that you should take immediately in order to make your submissions by the deadline. Incomplete applications will be considered **ineligible**. Applicants are urged to begin the application process well before the submission deadline. No exceptions will be made for organizations that have not completed the necessary steps.

Department of State bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes associated with electronic submissions via www.grants.gov. Incomplete application packages will not be considered.

The Federal award will be signed by the Department of State Grants Officer. The Grants Officer is a USG official delegated the authority by the DOS Procurement Executive to award and administer the award. The award Agreement is the only authorizing document and will be issued electronically through the State Assistance Management System (SAMS Domestic).

A1. Background

Established in 2017, the Foreign Affairs Information Technology (FAIT) Fellowship is one of the Department of State’s premiere diversity recruitment programs and fundamental to increasing the representation of diverse groups in the U.S. Foreign Service, in addition to creating a pipeline of information technology talent. The program attracts highly talented and qualified candidates to the Foreign Service who represent ethnic, racial, gender, social, and geographic diversity. The Department invests in the fellows by providing financial assistance towards the completion of either the last two years of a bachelor’s degree or a two-year master’s degree in an area relevant to information technology. Financial assistance may also cover the final two years of a five-year combined bachelor’s/master’s degree program which is relevant to information technology. Additionally, fellows receive professional development training, a domestic summer internship, an overseas summer development program, and mentoring by Foreign Service Information Management Specialists (IMS). Fellows enter the Foreign Service as IMS upon completion of their degree program and Foreign Service entry requirements. Successful candidates are obligated to a minimum five years of service in an appointment as a Foreign Service IMS. We anticipate **15 undergraduate and graduate** fellowships will be awarded

for the 2023 cohort, yet that number may be subject to change. The program encourages the application of members of minority groups historically underrepresented in the Foreign Service, women, and those with financial need.

A2. Program Goals and Objectives

Effective management of the Foreign Affairs IT (FAIT) Fellowship Program is fundamental its overall success. The Department is fully invested in this program and seeks to maintain its integrity and high quality. The goals and objectives of the FAIT Fellowship Program, include, but are not limited to:

Program Goals

- Contribute to a Foreign Service that reflects the diversity of the United States.
- Develop new Information Technology talent for the Department of State's Foreign Service at the undergraduate and graduate level

Program Objectives

- Attract and recruit highly talented and qualified candidates from across the United States who represent ethnic, racial, gender, social and geographic diversity to a Foreign Service career in the U.S. Department of State through a program of educational support and professional development.
- Provide candidates and fellows with information on the service elements, benefits, challenges, and requirements of a Foreign Service career.
- Provide candidates and fellows with information on the benefits and obligations of the fellowship and need to complete Foreign Service entry requirements including obtaining and maintaining required clearances (security, suitability and medical) and passing the Foreign Service Specialist Oral Assessment (FSSOA).
- Provide funding to assist fellows towards completing undergraduate and graduate degrees in academic disciplines representing the Information Management Specialist skill needs of the Department's Foreign Service.
- Enhance fellows' understanding of the work of an Information Management Specialist and the lifestyle of the Foreign Service through a domestic internship in Washington D.C. and an overseas summer development program at an embassy, consulate, or mission.
- Provide fellows with mentoring and professional development training to expose them to information that will help to prepare them to be successful Foreign Service Information Management Specialists.
- Administer the program in a strategic and efficient way that produces the intended results.

A3. Expected Results

Based on the goals and objectives of the program, expected results include, but are not limited to the following:

- Recruitment activities will target diverse candidates and institutions across the United States and highlight the Department of State's commitment to building a workforce that represents the broad and inclusive elements of our nation's diversity.
- The applicant pool will represent ethnic, racial, gender, social, and geographic diversity.
- Candidates' knowledge of the benefits, challenges and requirements of a Foreign Service career will increase.
- 15 fellows will be selected through a highly competitive nationwide selection process.
- Fellows will be prepared for careers with the Department of State as Foreign Service Information Management Specialists through a program that includes financial assistance towards the completion of either the last two years of a bachelor's degree or a two-year master's degree in an area relevant to information technology, mentoring, internships, and professional development.
- Fellows will complete Foreign Service Specialist Oral Assessment (FSSOA), medical, security and suitability clearance requirements as outlined in the fellowship agreement in a timely manner.
- The program will be administered in a cost-effective manner, resources will be matched to program objectives, and all program elements will be completed within budget.

A4. Main Activities

Program Description

The FAIT Fellowship Program provides financial assistance towards: tuition/mandatory fees, room/board, books and travel between home and school. The current model allocates: 1) up to \$21,500 per academic year per Fellow for actual expenses for tuition during the last two years of a undergraduate or graduate IT-related degree program, 2) a stipend for up to \$16,000 per year, for each of the two years of study to help cover room and board, books/laboratory fees, and other non-tuition related academic expenses, in addition to, travel between the Fellow's residence and the academic institution and 3) up to \$10,000 annually for costs related to the summer experiences – stipend, housing during the domestic internship, domestic/overseas travel and all required visas, inoculations and emergency medical insurance coverage. There are two summer experiences during the two-year program - an internship at a domestic office of the Department of State in Washington D.C and an overseas summer development program at a U.S embassy or consulate. In addition, Fellows receive mentoring from a Foreign Service Information Management Specialist (IMS) and professional development training during the program. Fellows who successfully complete the fellowship program and Foreign Service entry requirements receive appointments as Foreign Service IMS, in accordance with applicable law and State Department policy. Fellows are obligated to complete a minimum of five years of service as a Foreign Service IMS. Fellows who do not successfully complete the fellowship program and the subsequent five-year service obligation may be subject to a reimbursement obligation.

Fellowship Applicant Criteria

FAIT Fellowship Program requirements include: 1) proof of US citizenship at time of application; 2) enrollment in a full-time IT-related undergraduate degree program entering junior year for the following academic year or seeking admission to a full-time IT-related graduate degree program for the following academic year (fall entrance); 3) minimum 3.2 grade point average or higher on a 4.0 scale; 4) maintenance of a 3.2 grade point average throughout participation in the program; and 5) in addition to outstanding leadership and academic achievement, demonstration of financial need.

Programmatic Responsibilities

Recipients must identify dedicated staff to serve as liaisons with GTM/TAC on all aspects of this program, including someone who is knowledgeable regarding life and challenges of State Department Foreign Service Specialists as well as the rules and regulations governing Foreign Service careers.

The Recipient's responsibilities will include but are not limited to:

I. Outreach and Recruitment

The Recipient will identify and attract, based on financial need, outstanding students who represent ethnic, gender, social and geographic diversity and have an interest in pursuing a career as a Foreign Service Information Management Specialist in the U.S. Department of State. In coordination with GTM/TAC, the Recipient is expected to target diverse students, organizations and institutions, concentrating its efforts in the following categories: major research universities, liberal arts colleges, major community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). The Recipient is also expected to target universities, departments, associations, and other organizations with students and members relevant to information technology, including institutions designated as National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAEC). There should be a combined effort between in-person and virtual recruitment with an emphasis placed on virtual recruitment efforts and use of digital resources such as, but not limited to, "sourcing" through online resume databases and professional networking sites.

- a. **Producing Promotional/Recruitment Materials:** With Department approval, Recipient will prepare promotional and recruitment program materials. These materials should also conform to GSA section 508 guidelines to ensure equal access to users with disabilities and be compatible with appropriate assistive technology.
- b. **Designing Websites:** Recipient will establish and maintain a program website to include up-to-date program descriptions, including eligibility requirements, and written and video information about careers as a Foreign Service Information Management Specialist with the U.S. Department of State. The program website should be accessible to users with disabilities and compatible with assistive technology by conforming to GSA section 508 guidelines. In addition, the Recipient will establish an email address for the program (for example, FAITFellowship@addressofawardee.org).
- c. **Using Social Media and Online Recruitment Tools:** Recipient will work closely with GTM/TAC to develop an online recruitment and social media outreach plan, including online information sessions, webinars, workshops and Q&A sessions. The elements of this outreach plan should be accessible to users with disabilities and compatible with assistive technology by conforming to GSA section 508 standards. Recipient will obtain GTM/TAC approval for all content to be posted online regarding the program.

- d. **Maintaining Contact with Diplomats in Residence (DIRs), GTM/TAC Recruiters, and FAIT Fellowship Alumni:** Recipient will be expected to provide promotional materials directly to GTM recruiters including each DIR (Department of State Foreign Service Officers assigned to universities throughout the United States for recruitment purposes) and notify them of applicant profiles, selected finalists, and visits to their respective areas. Additionally, Recipient will collaborate with recruiters from the Bureau of Information Resource Management, Strategic Workforce Planning (IRM/SWP) and FAIT Fellowship alumni to garner support for and assistance with FAIT Fellowship activities such as mentoring, orientation and other related events.
- e. **Explaining Fellowship and Foreign Service Entry Requirements:** Recipient will counsel interested applicants on the benefits and obligations of the fellowship, Foreign Service entry requirements and obligations, and the benefits and challenges associated with a Foreign Service career.

II. Screening and Selection

In collaboration with GTM/TAC, Recipient will organize the screening and selection process. The FAIT Fellowship Program application deadline is usually in late January and final selection will take place in mid to late March.

- a. **The Candidate Selection Process:** Selection panel will be designated by GTM/TAC, the Recipient, and IRM/SWP. This process is conducted once a year and in phases. First, the initial application eligibility review is conducted by the Recipient. Following the initial review, the Recipient makes the eligible applications accessible to the interview panel and they make preliminary selections, narrowing the candidate applicant pool to finalists. The preliminary selection process is conducted virtually, with panel members reviewing materials sent electronically and sending in their scores to the Recipient to tabulate. The preliminary selection phase may include a telephone or video conference arranged and facilitated by the Recipient. Next, final selection is conducted. The interview panel meets in Washington, D.C. for a one and a half day meeting - mandatory half day training and one day of interviewing candidates. The writing panel reviews, evaluates and rank orders applicants' essay submissions. The writing panel meets in Washington, D.C. for a one and a half day meeting - a mandatory training and 1 day of scoring finalists' essays. Essay scores are provided to the interview panelists for inclusion in final selection decision. Final selection is made at the conclusion of the interviews.
- b. **Structure of Selection Committees:** The interview panel consists of twelve members who are divided into four subpanels (two graduate and two undergraduate) of three panelists each, two panelists are designated by GTM/TAC and IRM/SWP and the remaining one is designated by the Recipient, with prior approval from GTM/TAC and IRM/SWP. The writing panel consists of three members, two are designated by GTM/TAC and IRM/SWP and the remaining one is designated by the Recipient. The Department designates the Chair.

Recipient will be responsible for the following selection tasks in collaboration with GTM/TAC and, where noted, IRM/SWP:

- Conducting initial screening of candidates' applications for adherence to eligibility criteria and completeness.
- Submitting to GTM/TAC and IRM/SWP, in a timely fashion, the names and biographies of proposed panel members. GTM/TAC will provide the criteria for selection of panel members.

- Keeping GTM/TAC informed of all instructions and information provided to panelists with regards to the selection process.
- Providing panelists with electronic access to semi-finalists' applications and scoring sheets for selection of finalists. Copying and distributing hard copies of application packets if asked.
- Contacting all finalists prior to final selection and, in conjunction with GTM/TAC and IRM/SWP, provide a briefing on the requirements and benefits of a Foreign Service career.
- Coordinating administrative functions associated with the selection process, to include but not limited to:
 - Arranging travel and lodging for selection committee panelists and candidates for the final phase of the selection process generally held in the Washington, DC area.
 - Processing honoraria for designated panelists. Honoraria may be provided only to those panelists who do not receive a full time US Government salary.
 - Seeking reasonable lodging for candidates and panelists during selection in venue near GTM/TAC's BEX assessment center where selection interviews will take place.
 - Preparing a user guide for panelists.
 - Notifying in writing those finalists selected for the fellowship, securing written acceptances from selected fellows, and forwarding final list of fellows to GTM/TAC.
 - Notifying in writing those applicants not selected.

III. Orientation

In collaboration with GTM/TAC, Recipient will organize a three-day orientation program for new Fellows conducted in early June. The orientation program is conducted in Washington, D.C. In organizing the orientation program, the Recipient will be expected to:

- a. Provide administrative functions for the orientation to include arranging travel and lodging for the fellows, staff and panelists, folders and other related activities. Travel and lodging costs are subject to standard U.S. Government per diem rates.
- b. Counsel fellows on the benefits and obligations of the fellowship including the possible repayment conditions of the Fellowship and Foreign Service entry requirements.
- c. Ensure Fellows are provided with instructions related to the medical examinations and time is allocated in the orientation schedule for medical exams.
- d. In consultation with GTM/TAC and IRM/SWP, organize briefing sessions and networking events to discuss issues related to the FAIT Fellowship and a Foreign Service career including a mandatory information session on the Foreign Service Specialist Oral Assessment.
- e. Perform other related orientation activities as needed by GTM/TAC.

IV. Internships/Professional Development/Mentoring

There are two summer developmental experiences during the two-year fellowship program – an internship at a domestic office of the Department of State in Washington D.C. during the summer between the first and second year of the fellowship program and an overseas summer development program at a U.S. embassy or consulate during the summer after the second year of the fellowship program. In collaboration with GTM/TAC, Recipient will be expected to:

- Counsel fellows on choices for summer developmental experiences.
- Ensure that fellows understand what the program covers regarding travel, housing, stipend, inoculations, and visas.

- Ensure Fellows have required medical evacuation insurance prior to beginning overseas summer development program.
- Identify and arrange appropriate housing for Fellows during their domestic internships, generally in university dormitories. Domestic lodging rates during domestic internships are subject to standard U.S. government per diem rates.
- Follow up with Fellows regarding start/end dates of their summer experiences and ensure that they have arrived and reported, as scheduled, at their assigned location.
- Review internship evaluations and fellows' internship reports and counsel fellows regarding ways to improve and strengthen future performance.
- Develop and conduct a mandatory series of professional development seminars for all fellows completing their domestic internships in Washington D.C.
- Assign IRM/SWP approved Foreign Service mentors to all newly selected Fellows by the beginning of their first semester in their degree program.
- Perform other related internship, professional development and mentoring activities as needed by GTM/TAC.

V. Tracking and Monitoring

- Maintain institutional databases for recruitment purposes.
- Maintain databases of Fellows (by cohort) for purposes of tracking: a) current contact information b) GPA and academic program status, c) successful completion of program requirements, d) successful completion of contractual obligations, e) withdrawals/dismissals from the Fellowship program prior to completion, f) deferrals, g) degree program, and h) other relevant statistical information.

VI. Administrative

a. Disbursement of Funds

- Establishing and maintaining relationships with Student Accounts Offices at each fellow's educational institution and make timely payment of tuition and other fees up to the established cap limit. Prior to disbursement of any Fellowship funds, Recipient coordinates with GTM/TAC to ensure the Fellow has met all necessary requirements.

b. Record Keeping

- Monitoring Fellows' academic progress ensuring adherence to academic terms of contractual agreement which are that Fellow must maintain a 3.2 grade point average on a 4.0 scale.
- Maintaining transcripts for each Fellow.
- Maintaining document file for each fellow with all written correspondence, contractual agreement, payments, and other pertinent data. These files must be kept in accordance with 2 CFR 200.

c. Foreign Service Specialist Oral Assessment (FSSOA)

- Ensuring each Fellow meets their obligation with regard to taking the FSSOA prior to completion of their academic program.
- In consultation with GTM/TAC, arranging a Foreign Service Specialist Oral Assessment information sessions for fellows as part of the professional development seminars.

d. Annual Grantor/Recipient Meetings

- Recipient will consent to annual meetings as requested, with GTM/TAC leadership participation, to review program status.

e. Annual Program Evaluation

- Recipient will develop and conduct an annual survey of the cohort to elicit opinions on effectiveness of program components and program administration.
- Recipient will submit a report, which also includes the survey, to GTM/TAC annually by September 30, 2022, September 30, 2023, and September 30, 2024.

f. Milestone Schedule

The Recipient will submit to GTM/TAC in draft, for review and final approval, a milestone schedule for the 2023 FAIT Fellows cohort. Key activities to be identified in the milestone schedule should include, but are not limited to:

- Opening and closing dates for fellowship application
- Completion, delivery and posting dates for promotional materials
- A separate travel plan to include dates, location, and purpose of staff recruitment trips
- Dates associated with the selection process
- Dates associated with the orientation program
- Tuition and stipend payment dates
- Frequency of social media postings/online recruitment events with description of content
- Anticipated domestic internship and overseas summer development program start/end dates
- Lodging move-in/move-out dates for domestic summer intern

A5. Performance Indicators

The Recipient should monitor and report on performance indicators that are specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, and time-bound. Performance targets for each expected result should be established and details should be included on what sources of data will be used to document performance. Indicators should be relevant to the goals or objectives of the program.

Indicators may include but are not limited to:

- Demographics of the applicants including information on race, ethnicity, gender, geographic origin, disability, and financial need.
- Number of recruitment events held in which information was shared with applicants about the benefits and obligations of the fellowship, Foreign Service entry requirements, and the benefits and challenges associated with a Foreign Service career.
- Number of competitive applicants.
- Number of fellows completing the program requirements – including:
 - taking the FSSOA as outlined in the fellowship agreement
 - completing an IT-related undergraduate or graduate degree program
 - completing requirements to receive medical, security, and suitability clearances in a timely manner
- Number of fellows matched with Foreign Service mentors by the start of their first semester in the program.
- Effectiveness of program elements in preparing fellows for Foreign Service careers:
 - performance and impact assessed through participant surveys on delivery of program elements - orientation, professional development training, internships and mentoring.
- Attrition and retention rates of the cohort.
- Program elements completed on time and within budget.

A6. Substantial Involvement

The Bureau of Global Talent Management, Office of Talent Acquisition (GTM/TAC) anticipates awarding a cooperative agreement as a result of this NOFO. A cooperative agreement provides for substantial involvement between the Federal awarding agency and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity. A successful applicant will be expected to coordinate closely with the Washington DC-based awarding bureau, GTM/TAC. Substantial involvement will include but is not limited to: GTM/TAC prior approval on all program guidelines, materials, and policies. Areas of substantial involvement will be outlined in the award's final agreement.

Section B. Federal Award Information

B1. Available Funding

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Foreign Relations Authorization Act FY1990 and 1991, Public Law 101-246, 101st Congress, 104 STAT.42 Section 47 (February 16, 1990). It states, "The Secretary of State may make grants to post-secondary educational institutions or students for the purpose of increasing the level of knowledge and awareness of, and interest in employment with the Foreign Service, consistent with section 105 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980. To the extent possible, the Secretary shall give special emphasis to promoting such knowledge and awareness of, and interest in employment with the Foreign Service among students."

Utilization of a cooperative agreement for this program is authorized in the Grants and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Public Law 95-224, 95th Congress, 92 STAT.5 Section 6 (February 3, 1978) which states, "Each executive agency shall use a type of cooperative agreement as the legal instrument reflecting a relationship between the Federal Government and a State or local government or other recipient whenever (1) the principal purpose of the relationship is the transfer of money, property, services, or anything of value to the State or local government or other recipient to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by Federal statute, rather than acquisition, by purchase, lease, or barter, of property or services for the direct benefit or use of the Federal Government; and (2) substantial involvement is anticipated between the executive agency, acting for the Federal Government, and the State or local government or other recipient during performance of the contemplated activity."

The Department of State reserves the right to fund any or none of the proposals submitted and reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase the budget in accordance with the needs of the project and the availability of funds.

The Department of State may consider continuing the program funded under this award beyond the initial period of performance on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State and USG. Pending successful implementation of these programs and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, the Department of State may renew the cooperative agreement for a period of two additional fiscal years before openly competing the program again. As each year adds new fellows to the program, applicants will need to demonstrate the ability to handle multiple years of cohorts.

B2. Award Management

The successful applicant awarded under this NOFO will need to routinely collaborate with GTM/TAC.

The successful applicant must ensure that all funds are used in a manner consistent with any applicable restrictions on funding. See D5 below for funding restrictions.

Pre-Award Costs

Effective implementation of this program may require the recipient to incur expenses prior to the official award. Pending availability of funds, the recipient may be reimbursed for allowable pre-award costs incurred up to 90 days prior to the official award with prior approval from the awarding bureau and the Grants Officer. Pre-award costs are incurred at the Recipient's own risk and are subject to the Grants Officer's approval. **Pre-award costs are included in, not additional to, the total funding available for this project.**

Section C. Eligibility Information

C1. Eligible Applicants

See page 1, Eligibility Category.

Preference will be given to organizations with at least three years of experience in administering a fellowship program of this size, nature, and complexity.

Technically eligible submissions are those which: 1) arrive electronically to www.grants.gov by the designated deadline; 2) have heeded all instructions contained in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), including registrations, length and completeness of submission; and 3) do not violate any of the guidelines stated in this document and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI)

C2. Cost Share

Not required. Providing cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not an eligibility requirement for this NOFO and will not be factored in during the merit review process.

Note: If cost-share is included in the budget, the award Recipient must maintain written records to support all allowable costs that are claimed as its contribution to cost-share, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. In the event the recipient does not meet the minimum amount of cost-sharing as stipulated in the recipient's budget, DOS contribution may be reduced in proportion to the Recipient's contribution.

C3. Other Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a unique entity identifier (UEI), as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 for information on how to obtain these registrations.

Applicants, including U.S. affiliates of international organizations must provide a valid Unique Entity Identification (UEI), and **completed** www.sam.gov registration when submitting application on www.grants.gov in response to this NOFO. **Applicants that do not have a valid UEI and completed www.sam.gov registration will NOT be eligible for consideration. Implementing partners/sub-recipient organizations are required to have a valid UEI number.**

Applicants listed on the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) in the System for Award Management (SAM) are not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), “Debarment and Suspension.” Additionally, no entity listed on the EPLS can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the EPLS in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

Organizations must have a commitment to equal opportunity employment practices and to non-discrimination practices with regard to beneficiaries, without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

Organizations may only submit one application per organization. If more than one application is submitted by an organization, only the first application received will be reviewed for eligibility and funding.

Section D. Application and Submission Information

D1. Address to request Application Package

Applicants can find application forms on www.grants.gov under the announcement title and funding opportunity number provided above.

Please refer to the **Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI)** for additional application submission instructions, including information on required documents and format. Please follow both, the PSI and the NOFO, to ensure that the proposal package submission is in full compliance with the requirements. Proposal submissions that do not meet all of the requirements outlined in this NOFO and the associated PSI will **not** be considered.

Once the NOFO deadline has passed, DOS may not discuss this competition with any applicant until the proposal review process has been completed.

D2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Any prospective applicant who has questions concerning the contents of this NOFO should submit them by email to the contacts listed in Section G. Please refer to the funding opportunity number and title. Responses to applicant questions will be posted on www.grants.gov within 24-48 hours from the date of the receipt of questions.

D3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)

Required Registrations:

The Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. SAM.gov is the Federal government's primary database for complying with FFATA reporting requirements. OMB designated SAM.gov as the central repository to facilitate applicant and recipient use of a single public website that consolidates data on all federal financial assistance. Under the law, it is mandatory to obtain a UEI number and register in www.sam.gov

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), “Debarment and Suspension.” Additionally, no entity listed on the EPLS can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the EPLS in www.SAM.gov to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

Starting April 2022, DUNS will be replaced by UEI which will be assigned by www.sam.gov. UEIs will be assigned to organizations that will have to register for/renew it this year. As a reminder, www.sam.gov needs to be renewed yearly. <https://sam.gov/content/home>

CAGE is assigned domestically to U.S. organizations when they register in www.sam.gov. CAGE must be renewed every 5 years. Site for CAGE : <https://cage.dla.mil/Home/UsageAgree>

NCAGE is assigned to overseas organizations and has to be renewed every 5 years.

Site for NCAGE: <https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/CageTool/home>

It is in the organization’s best interest to check if their CAGE/or NCAGE codes are active. Organizations are required to register/or renew their CAGE or NCAGE codes **prior** to registering or renewing www.sam.gov . Both registration and renewals for both CAGE and NCAGE can take up to 10 days. Organization’s legal address in NCAGE/CAGE must mirror www.sam.gov.

www.sam.gov requires all entities to renew their registration once a year in order to maintain an active registration status in SAM.gov. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure it has an active registration in www.sam.gov

If an organization plans to sub-contract or sub-award any of the funds under an award, those sub-recipients must also have a unique entity identifier (UEI number).

If an organization does not have an active registration in SAM.gov prior to submitting an application, the application will be deemed **ineligible**. All organizations applying for federal assistance awards (except individuals) must obtain these registrations, the latter are free of charge.

Note: The process of obtaining a www.sam.gov registration may take anywhere from 2-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible. Numerous errors require correction such as an address mismatch and can delay final registration. After 90 days of original registration/or renewal submission, if the application is not corrected it will be deleted and the organization will need to re-start the process.

All organizations applying for grants (except individuals) must obtain these registrations. All are free of charge.

D4. Submission Dates and Times

Applicants are urged to begin the application process well before the **submission deadline as stated on page 1**. No exceptions will be made for organizations that have not completed the necessary steps.

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

SAMS Domestic and Grants.gov automatically log the date and time an application submission is made, and the Department of State will use this information to determine whether an application has been submitted on time. Late applications are neither reviewed nor considered.

If ultimately provided with a notification of intent to make a Federal award, applicants typically have two to three weeks to provide additional information and documents requested in the notification of intent. The deadlines may vary in each notification of intent and applicants must adhere to the stated deadline in the notification of intent.

D5. Funding Restrictions

The following activities and costs are not covered under this announcement (this list is NOT exhaustive):

- Construction or renovations is not an allowable activity under this award;
- Expenses made prior to the approval of a proposal or unreasonable expenditures will not be reimbursed;
- Projects intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the organization;
- Projects seeking funds for personal use;
- Projects that require a participation fee;
- Administration of a project that will make a profit;
- Expenses incurred before or after the specified dates of award period of performance (unless prior written approval is received);
- Projects designed to advocate policy views or positions of foreign governments or views of a particular political faction;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Costs of entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and social activities, and any associated costs, are unallowable, except where specific costs that might otherwise be considered entertainment have a programmatic purpose and are authorized either in the approved budget for the federal award or with prior written approval of the Grants Officer.

Representation by Organization Regarding a Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Criminal Conviction: In accordance with section 7073 of Division K of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (Public Law 113-76) none of the funds made available by that Act may be used to enter into an assistance award with any organization that –

(1) Was “convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency has direct knowledge of the conviction, unless the agency has considered, in accordance with its procedures, that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government”; or

(2) Has any “unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, unless the Federal agency has considered, in accordance with its procedures, that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.”

For the purposes of Section 7073, it is the Department of State’s policy that no award may be made to any organization covered by (1) or (2) above, unless the Procurement Executive has made a written determination that suspension or debarment is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

D6. Other Submission Requirements

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in Grants.gov and that an application has been received by the system in its entirety. DOS bears no responsibility for disqualification that results from applicants not being registered before the due date or for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes. Additionally, you must save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

Section E. Application Review Information

E1. Criteria

The Department of State will issue an award to the applicant whose proposal represents the best value to the U.S. Government on the basis of technical merit, efficient use of U.S. Government funds, and satisfactory organizational capacity. In addition, the organization must demonstrate adequate financial management capability to be measured by a responsibility determination.

Applications should contain the applicants' best terms from both cost and technical standpoints. The implementing partners (sub-recipients) of the primary recipient will be subject to Department of State approval.

Eligible applications will be evaluated by an independent review panel consisting of subject matter experts from other DOS bureaus/or offices, U.S. Embassies, and/or other U.S. Government agencies. Final approval resides with the DOS Grants Officer.

The decision for the final eligibility and award determination rests with the Grants Officer.

The following criteria will serve as a standard which all eligible applications will be evaluated against. Each eligible application will be evaluated and scored on the review criteria using a 100-point scale.

The review panel will apply the following criteria when rating proposals:

- **Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives:** Applicant's understanding and appreciation for the goals and objectives of the Foreign Affairs IT Fellowship Program and demonstrated ability to achieve the goals and objectives. **15 points**
- **Institutional Capacity:** Demonstrated knowledge of the Department of State's Foreign Service Specialist career path and ability to mentor effectively Fellows pursuing this career. Demonstrated ability to manage successfully programs of this magnitude and complexity. Applicant's fiscal health and ability to avoid program delays by covering necessary program expenses, at times, even before the award payment is processed. Applicant must provide evidence of its past performance and budget management of programs of comparable complexity and size. Applicant's designation of a senior level program manager with decision making authority; program coordinator/assistant; full or part time recruitment staff with diversity recruitment experience and/or knowledge of the Department of State's Foreign Service. **30 points**

- **Program Management and Evaluation:** Design and effectiveness of Applicant's recruitment, implementation and evaluation plans and how they will be used to achieve program goals. **30 points**
- **Financial Capacity/Cost Effectiveness:** Applicants should demonstrate cost-effectiveness of the use of federal funds by presenting reasonable budgets based on real figures. Budgets that either significantly over-estimate or underestimate line-item amounts will not be viewed as cost-effective. In addition, it is recommended that the budget narrative demonstrate the applicant's ability to economize and plan effectively. Cost-share is voluntary and will **not** be used as a factor to evaluate the submission. **15 points**
- **Sustainability/Multiplier Effect:** Applicant's clear articulation of how desired outcomes will be generated, and methods used to ensure sustainability of the program and competitive program participants. **10 points**

Cost Review

Costs will be reviewed for **reasonableness, allowability, allocability**, and cost-effectiveness of the use of USG funds. The review of cost-effectiveness will include an examination of the application's budget detail to ensure it is a realistic financial expression of the proposed project and does not contain estimated costs that are not **allocable, reasonable, or allowable**. Applications that have more efficient operational systems that reduce operation costs will be favorably considered on that factor. Final approval of the budget resides with the Grants Officer.

Applications that maximize direct activity costs and minimize administrative costs are encouraged. Other considerations are the completeness of the application, adequacy of budget detail, and consistency with elements of the technical application. In addition, the organization must demonstrate adequate financial management capability to be measured by a responsibility determination.

E2. Review and Selection Process

Applications will first be reviewed to determine technical eligibility.

All technically eligible applications will move forward to the merit review panel. Applications will be reviewed against the same criteria, listed above. Applications will be evaluated based on the strengths and weaknesses of the aforementioned categories and for consistency with the program goals and key areas of interest as contained in this NOFO.

Both the Merit Review Panel and the awarding bureau (GTM/TAC) may provide conditions and recommendations on applications to enhance the proposed project, which must be addressed by the applicant before further consideration of the award. To ensure effective use of US Government funds, conditions or recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and project activities.

E3. Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)

The Department of State, prior to making a federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the

applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313).

The applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.

The Department of State will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

Section F. Federal Award Administration Information

F1. Federal Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified via email. This email may include a request for the applicant to respond to panel conditions and recommendations. This notification is not an authorization to begin activities and does not constitute formal approval or a funding commitment.

Additional information that successful applicants may be required to submit after notification of intent to make a federal award, but prior to issuance of a federal award, may include:

- Written responses and any revised application documents addressing any conditions or recommendations from the Review Panel and awarding bureau;
- Completion of the Department's Financial Management Survey, if receiving GTM/TAC funding for the first time or requested by the Grants Officer;
- Submission of required documents to register in the Payment Management System (PMS) managed by the Department of Health and Human Services if receiving GTM/TAC funding for the first time;
- Other requested information or documents included in the notification of intent to make a federal award or subsequent communications prior to issuance of a federal award.

Final approval is also contingent on Congressional Notification requirements being met and final review and approval by the Department's warranted Grants Officer.

The award shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer subsequent to the panel review and selection of proposals. The Grants Officer is the Government official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the sole authorizing document and it will be provided to the Recipient electronically through SAMS Domestic. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.

Issuance of this NOFO and negotiation of applications received does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. Government, nor does it commit the USG to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the USG reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

F2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply.

These include:

- [2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT](#)
- [2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION](#)
- [2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS](#)
- [2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE \(FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE\)](#)
- [2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY](#)
- [2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS](#)
- [U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#)

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget’s guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following:

- The President’s September 2, 2020, memorandum, entitled *Memorandum on Reviewing Funding to State and Local Government Recipients of Federal Funds that Are Permitting Anarchy, Violence, and Destruction in American Cities*;
- *Executive Order on Protecting American Monuments, Memorials, and Statues and Combating Recent Criminal Violence* (E.O. 13933); and
- [Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#) (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register’s 85 FR 49506 on August 13, 2020, particularly on:
 - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
 - Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. No. 115—232) (2 CFR part 200.216),
 - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
 - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
 - Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

Applicants should plan to coordinate with GTM/TAC throughout the course of the agreement to ensure assistance is provided only to eligible participants.

F3. Reporting

Financial Reports

The Recipient will be required to submit quarterly financial reports (unless stipulated otherwise in the final Agreement) throughout the project period, using Form FFR SF-425, the Federal Financial Report form. If payment is made through the Payment Management System, all financial reports must be submitted electronically through the Payment Management System. The Recipient is also required to upload to SAMS Domestic a pdf version of all financial reports (Federal Financial report) they have submitted in the Payment Management System. Form FFR (SF-425) can be found here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/post-award-reporting-forms.html#sortby=1>

Progress Reporting

The Recipient will be required to submit quarterly progress reports (unless stipulated otherwise in the final Agreement) throughout the project period; the frequency will be determined by DOS prior to award. The awardee will be required to upload all progress reports to the award file in SAMS Domestic.

Progress reports should also reflect the awardee's continued focus on measuring the project's impact on the overarching goals or problems the project set out to address. An assessment of the overall project impact, as appropriate, should be included in each quarterly project report.

Final Report

The final report will be due no later than 120 days after the end date of the award or termination of all project activities. The Final Report shall include the following elements: executive summary, successes, outcomes, best practices, how the project addresses gender issues and marginalized communities, how the project will be sustained, and a final financial report. Additional guidance may be provided prior to the award end date.

Please note: Delays in reporting may result in delays of payment approvals and failure to provide required reports may jeopardize the recipients' ability to receive future U.S. government funds.

GTM/TAC reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial project information during the award period of performance.

Section G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact

G1. Agency Contacts

Patricia Boerner
Foreign Affairs IT Fellowship Program Manager
Bureau of Global Talent Management
Office of Talent Acquisition
BoernerPM@state.gov

Christa George
Pickering and Rangel Fellowship Program Manager
Bureau of Global Talent Management
Office of Talent Acquisition
GeorgeCM@state.gov

G2. Questions

Any prospective applicant who has questions concerning the contents of this NOFO must email them to the contacts listed above with the subject “[Applicant Name] [NOFO title and Funding Opportunity number].” To maintain fairness and transparency in competition, GTM will not answer substantive NOFO questions except when posting questions and answers to the announcement page as described below.

All questions must be submitted via email to contacts listed above by deadline stated on page 3. GTM/TAC will periodically create a document of submitted questions with answers and upload it to the announcement page in grants.gov. Prospective applicants are advised to review the announcement page in grants.gov for any updates. Note that once the NOFO deadline has passed, DOS staff in Washington, D.C. may not discuss this completion with applicants until the review process has been completed.

For questions about SAMS Domestic accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact the ILMS help desk by phone at 1-888-313-4567 (toll charges for international callers) or through the Self Service online portal that can be accessed from <https://afsism.service-now.com/ilms/home>. Customer Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except for federal holidays.

With the exception of technical submission questions, during the solicitation period U.S. Department of State staff in Washington and overseas shall not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process has been completed and an award has been made.

The information in this NOFO is binding and may not be modified by any awarding bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by awarding bureau that contradicts this language will not be binding.

Section H. Other Information

H1. Conflict of Interest

In accordance with applicable Federal awarding agency policy, applicants must disclose in writing any potential conflict of interest to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity.

H2. Applicant Vetting

N/A

H3. Marking Policy

Applicants are advised that recipients and sub-recipients/implementing partners of Federal assistance awards are subject to the State Department’s Marking Policy. More information on this policy can be found in Section N of the Department of State’s Standard Terms and Conditions:

<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/U.S.-Department-of-State-Standard-Terms-and-Conditions-10-21-2020-508.pdf>

H4. Evaluation Policy

Recipient will be expected to develop and conduct an annual survey of the cohort to elicit opinions on effectiveness of program components and program administration.

Applicants are advised that recipients and sub-recipients of Federal assistance awards are subject to the Department of State Evaluation Policy. More information on this policy can be found here:

<https://www.state.gov/guidance-for-the-design-monitoring-and-evaluation-policy-at-the-department-of-state/>

H5. Monitoring Site Visits

A monitoring site visit, at least once during the lifetime of a grant, may be conducted by Department of State personnel. The site visit is conducted to gather additional information on the recipient's ability to properly implement the project, manage DOS funds, and share substantiating document for programmatic and financial reporting. Specifically, the site visit may involve the review of the programmatic progress (progress on activities, sub-recipient/consultant work, etc.) as well as administrative and financial management and controls.

H6. Privacy Disclosure

DOS understands that some information contained in applications may be considered sensitive or proprietary and will make appropriate efforts to protect such information. However, applicants are advised that DOS cannot guarantee that such information will not be disclosed, including pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or other similar statutes.