



Educational and Cultural Affairs

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

FY 2025 Community College Initiative Program

Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017272

Application Deadline: August 4, 2025

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A. Basic Information

1. Overview.

Funding Opportunity Title	FY 2025 Community College Initiative Program
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0017272
Announcement Type	New Cooperative Agreement
Deadline for Applications	August 4, 2025, 11:59pm Eastern (Washington DC time)
Assistance Listing Number	19.009
Length of Performance Period	12 to 36 months
Number of Awards Anticipated	One award
Award Amount	Approximately \$3,937,500
Total Available Funding	\$3,937,500, pending availability of funds
Type of Funding	FY25 Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs (ECE) Funds
Funding Instrument Type	Cooperative Agreement

Anticipated Award Date	August 25, 2025
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This notice is subject to availability of funding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government.

ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

Pending satisfactory implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this award for two additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

2. Executive Summary.

The Office of Global Educational Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State announces an open competition for the FY 2025 Community College Initiative (CCI) Program. ECA is seeking proposal submissions for one cooperative agreement to design, implement, and oversee the CCI Program.

The program advances America's security and prosperity by equipping foreign students, many from regions vulnerable to radicalization or illegal immigration, with technical skills in critical industries. With improved technical, professional, and entrepreneurial skills, the participants return home to contribute to economic growth and stability in countries of strategic importance to the United States.

U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) that represent consortia or other combinations of accredited U.S. community colleges may submit only one proposal to cooperate with the Bureau under this competition. Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

B. Eligibility

1. Eligible Applicants.

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

- U.S. Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations
- U.S. Not-for-profit public and private educational institutions

Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

2. Cost Sharing.

There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this program.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements.

- a. All organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid registration in SAM.gov. Please see *Section E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines* for more information.
- b. ECA's Grant Guidelines require that organizations demonstrate at least four years of experience in conducting international exchanges to be eligible for awards exceeding \$130,000 in ECA funding. As noted in *Section A. Basic Information*, ECA anticipates issuing one award, for approximately \$3,937,500. Therefore, organizations must demonstrate four years of experience in conducting international exchanges in your proposal to be eligible to apply under this competition.
- c. All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, and the PSI; not doing so may result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.
- d. All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed line-item budget, and budget narrative.
- e. Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the PSI document.

C. Program Description

1. Authority.

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

2. Purpose.

The program advances America's security and prosperity by addressing global challenges that result in economic instability. The program equips foreign students, many from regions vulnerable to radicalization or illegal immigration, with technical skills and U.S. networks in fields that are of strategic importance to the United States. With improved technical, professional, and entrepreneurial skills, the participants return home to join a global network of over 3,900 CCI

alumni from 30 countries. Participants are required to complete a minimum two-year residency in the home country. These emerging leaders contribute to economic growth and stability, integrating a U.S. perspective into critical industries in strategic countries. Program content, duration of study, and participating countries will align with U.S. foreign policy priorities and emerging global workforce demands.

Through targeted academic and professional opportunities, CCI participants develop their leadership potential and gain critical skills to respond to 21st century needs. The fields of study build on the academic, vocational, and technical expertise of U.S. community colleges and respond to global skill gaps and the local industry demands. CCI participating countries are better positioned to engage with U.S. business and trade partners by cultivating local expertise in Agriculture, Applied Engineering, Business and Entrepreneurship, Creative Economy and Media, and Information Technology. CCI also focuses on equipping early childhood education practitioners to assist in stabilizing countries subject to radicalization and illegal immigration.

3. Program Specific Guidelines.

Applicants are requested to submit a narrative of no more than 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages outlining a comprehensive strategy for the administration and implementation of the CCI Program. The proposal shall identify specific accredited U.S. community colleges to host approximately 100 participants for at least one academic semester, but no more than one academic year, in groups of approximately 12-16 participants. The proposal must also demonstrate the applicant's commitment to work with ECA to align the program's activities and participant selection with U.S. foreign policy priorities and the expertise and academic opportunities at the identified host colleges.

ECA reserves the right to adjust exchange program duration to meet the goals of the program prior to participant arrival and/or to pilot shortened programming to maximize participant numbers and/or respond to emergent circumstances or U.S. foreign policy priorities.

CCI Program Administration and Implementation

In addition to the following guidelines, the applicant's program proposal must conform with the requirements and guidelines outlined in the Solicitation Package, which includes the NOFO and the PSI.

Applicants should propose a program that allows for at least one semester, and up to one academic year, of study in the 2025-2026 academic year. ECA reserves the right to amend the program delivery, duration, and timing of participation within the dates of the award based on U.S. foreign policy needs and program objectives, to maximize participant numbers, and/or to respond to unforeseen circumstances. Final program models and delivery will meet program objectives as outlined therein.

Institutional Capacity:

Organizations that represent consortia or other combinations of community colleges are eligible to apply to administer the CCI Program-wide activities and to oversee the implementation of CCI at individual U.S. host community college campuses. All proposals must demonstrate depth of experience in conducting and administering complex and multi-faceted international education programs. The proposal must reflect the applicant's institutional capacity and the range of fields in which the proposed host colleges have expertise. The applicant, on behalf of the entire host institution consortium, shall demonstrate the organization's interest in and capacity to host participants from any and all countries and in all specified fields.

Organizations cooperating with ECA on this program are strongly encouraged to work to obtain financial aid, scholarships, tuition awards, in-state tuition, and private sector funding, including support from foundations, businesses, or civic groups, as cost-sharing for the program.

Host Campus Institutional Capacity:

Host campuses must be identified in the proposal, and letters of project commitment from the senior administrative official authorized to make such a commitment must be included for each college.

The proposal must describe the accredited U.S. community colleges that will host multinational cohorts of CCI participants for programs that include academic coursework, a professional internship, service learning, cultural exchange, and leadership development activities. Each host college should be selected on the basis of excellence in the field(s) of study in which the college is hosting participants, geographic representation, ability to leverage institutional and private sector funding, resources to safely support international students, proven success hosting international students, and availability of appropriate, safe, and cost-effective housing. Host colleges must be committed to assist with housing the participants, preferably in dormitories or apartments near the campus. Host colleges will be expected to have experience in conducting international education exchange programs, including successfully hosting international students and visitors or providing a well-documented plan that demonstrates the capacity to do so. Proposals must also describe how the proposed CCI Program at each host campus would contribute to internationalization efforts at each campus and advance the CCI Program objectives for community colleges as stated in the NOFO (section C.5. Goals and Objectives).

Each host college must assign a campus adviser who is responsible for guiding participants in individual development plans and serving as a central resource on participant scholarships, the J-1 visa program, aspects of academic and cultural adjustment, and integration into the campus and local community. The adviser also serves as a link between the participants and the CCI program administrators.

Applicants need to demonstrate the capacity to administer the following CCI Program-wide activities: managing the participant recruitment, application review, and placement cycle; coordinating pre-departure materials and participation in virtual programming; planning and executing at least one event for all CCI participants; implementing a comprehensive monitoring

and evaluation plan; and overseeing the CCI Program-wide branding and alumni engagement efforts. Applicants must also demonstrate the capacity to implement customized programming at individual host campuses. Such programming would include a U.S. arrival orientation, pre-academic programs, academic programs, micro-credential or certificate programs, and short-term, thematic opportunities that maximize college-specific expertise. Proposals should demonstrate the proposed host institutions' ability to include flexibilities to implement in-person, hybrid, or virtual programming as conditions require.

Participants and Recruitment:

ECA anticipates recruiting approximately 100 program participants from approximately 15 countries, to include countries in all six world regions (participating countries are subject to change). Participants are recruited through the Public Affairs Section of the local U.S. embassy or consulate, or through the Fulbright Commission, if available, in the eligible country. Recent participating countries have included Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia, Türkiye, and Ukraine. ECA reserves the right to change eligible countries; proposals should indicate flexibility and willingness to host international participants from any and all identified countries.

The CCI Program emphasizes the selection of qualified emerging leaders who can leverage the applied technical skills, improved employability, and global exposure gained through the program to positively impact their communities. ECA has traditionally targeted participants who have some previous work experience or attend technical-vocational institutions in their home countries. Target audiences will be determined in consultation with U.S. embassies and consulates and Fulbright Commissions in-country. Program candidates will not be eligible if they have completed the academic equivalent of three years or more toward a U.S. bachelor's degree in the field of study for which they are nominated. Preferred candidates will not have significant professional experience in the field of study for which they are nominated. Participants return home in a stronger position to contribute to the local needs and the economic stability of their home countries. Individuals living in the United States are not eligible, and preference is given to those without significant U.S. or other overseas study experience.

ECA annually determines the participating countries, the fields of study, and the number of nominations allotted to each country. ECA traditionally announces a recruitment cycle to U.S. embassies and Fulbright Commissions at least six months prior to the anticipated program start date. ECA will work with the recipient to finalize the application materials that will be distributed to U.S. embassies and Fulbright Commissions as part of the recruitment announcement. The application forms need to include a list of fields and eligible subfields at the host campuses for which the candidates would apply (see Academic Programs: Academic Coursework section for eligible fields).

Application Review and Placements:

The proposal shall describe in detail a system for receiving and reviewing all rank-ordered application submissions from U.S. embassies and Fulbright Commissions abroad; conducting a technical review of applications and ensuring completeness of documentation; conducting a

medical review and clearance process for each candidate; distributing complete applications among host institutions to ensure the best program placements for participants' academic and professional goals; and recommending placements to ECA. Final approval of principal and alternate slates of candidates and placements resides with ECA.

The proposal narrative must clearly state the applicant's commitment to consult closely with ECA on participant placements and communicate placement information to U.S. embassy Public Affairs Sections or Fulbright Commissions in the partner countries. Each host campus cohort will have a mix of participants, reflecting a range of geographic regions, experiences, and strengths identified during the selection process. No invitations to participate in the program may be issued without U.S. Department of State approval.

Pre-departure Orientation:

A pre-departure orientation (PDO) will be developed by the recipient and hosted by U.S. embassies and Fulbright Commissions for each country cohort. The proposal must demonstrate plans for developing and disseminating CCI Program-specific PDO materials to U.S. embassies or Fulbright Commissions. The plans should describe the recipient's virtual participation in the orientations and express its coordination of ECA's involvement. The recipient will design the orientation to accommodate participants who may be traveling abroad for the first time. PDOs are expected to occur soon after the participants are informed of their selection and at least three weeks prior to the program start date. Prior to arrivals in the United States, the recipient will coordinate engagement between the participants and the appropriate contact(s) of the respective host institution. This engagement is intended to ensure readiness for travel and program participation and to improve the host institution's understanding of any special accommodations needed.

English Language Learning:

The proposal must detail the recipient's ability to provide English language support for all participants, regardless of whether additional English language learning is required.

Eligible CCI Program candidates need a basic working knowledge of the English language as demonstrated by a minimum TOEFL (or TOEFL-equivalent) score of 480. U.S. embassies and Fulbright Commissions will submit English language proficiency test results as part of the nomination process. Proposals must describe host campus programs and resources for English language learning that will be available to participants needing additional language instruction prior to and/or during the program. Proposals must also demonstrate a commitment to measuring change in English language proficiency throughout the program and include a plan for conducting such an assessment.

For participants who meet the minimum language requirement, instruction in academic writing is recommended. The proposal should describe ways to connect all participants with available host institution-based resources and the Department of State's English language resources both in-country and online (www.americanenglish.state.gov).

Program Orientation and Pre-Semester Programming:

A program orientation and pre-semester programming must be provided for all participants prior to the start of in-person/ on-campus classes. These programs combined shall be no less than 80 contact hours over the span of approximately two to ten weeks. Applicants are encouraged to employ various modalities (including virtual and in-person) to effectively deliver the content across the period of time proposed. The proposal must justify the duration of this programming and clearly explain the formats and platforms to be utilized.

The program orientation should include an introduction to American society, culture and higher education to improve the participants' transition into the program. Through the program orientation, participants should also be familiarized with their local U.S. communities, campus facilities, and services and develop the range of skills needed to be successful in the program (i.e., study skills, time management, use of technology, budgeting, safety and emergency response). Additionally, the orientation should introduce the expectations for behavior and program participation, the rules and regulations of the host colleges, and the laws of the respective U.S. communities.

Proposals shall describe campus resources and partnerships that participants will be introduced to during the orientation period and referred to throughout the program for on-going support (i.e., academic advising, study centers, language and writing labs, health or counseling services, student organizations, internship or career services, student services, and international student services).

The applicant is encouraged to propose additional virtual programming between the applicant/host institution and participants, that helps to ensure the participants' understanding of the industries relevant to their chosen fields of study and allows them to build or sharpen the professional skills relevant to labor market demands.

CCI-Wide Event:

Proposals must include at least one CCI-wide program event of approximately three days in duration that will take place mid-way through the program. Proposals shall include a description of the overall concept of the program; a rationale for the duration, timing, and location of the event; and plans for coordinating logistics and implementing the program. The event should facilitate participant professional skill-building, with a focus on leadership, employability, and business best practices. Programming must align with priority U.S. foreign policy themes. This engagement event will be closely coordinated with the ECA Program Office. Please provide a tentative plan for hosting the event virtually if unforeseen circumstances do not allow for an in-person event.

Participant Monitoring:

Organizations cooperating with ECA on this program will be expected to keep the Bureau informed of the progress of these academic and enrichment experiences as well as other aspects of the program throughout the year.

Proposals must discuss how the participants' progress in achieving program goals and objectives will be monitored at their U.S. host institutions (e.g., monitoring tools, surveys, interviews, work plans). The proposal shall describe individualized advising and support services host colleges will provide to the participants. The proposal shall cite the intended frequency of communication with participants and outline performance goals or benchmarks for each semester. The proposal shall also discuss evaluation of participants' successes and the monitoring of their challenges during the program, as well as mechanisms to address and improve the quality of participant activities. Staff assigned to the project shall be knowledgeable about best practices in the field of international education.

Health, Safety, and Security of Participants:

Proposals must demonstrate how the program administrator will safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of exchange participants in the program design and through participant monitoring. Proposals shall also include flexibilities and contingency planning to demonstrate the proposed institutions' ability to respond to emergency circumstances that may arise during implementation. For example, best practices for responding to local, national, or international events or emergencies should be incorporated into planning and implementation for CCI participants. Proposals shall include clear protocols on responding to participant emergencies.

Alumni Engagement, Follow-On Activities, and Reporting:

Alumni activities are an important part of the Bureau's academic exchange programs. Activities ease the returnees' transitions home, strengthen the CCI alumni network, and build the CCI Program brand.

After their CCI Program, many participants return home to challenging environments with high youth unemployment rates and limited access to financial resources. Alumni programming in the form of professional development activities, virtual programming, and social media outreach provides critical program follow-on and maximizes and extends the benefit of the participants' experiences in the United States. Proposals shall describe how long-term links with CCI alumni will be fostered and maintained. No more than \$100,000 of the overall budget shall be utilized for alumni programming.

The recipient should be prepared to coordinate with the previous implementing partner to obtain alumni records and historical data.

CCI Branding:

Proposals must explain plans to promote CCI-wide branding and administer CCI websites and social media properties cooperatively with ECA and in compliance with [ECA's Communications Guidance](#). The proposal must demonstrate a commitment to sharing and publicizing program events, participant highlights, and alumni news with ECA and program stakeholders through the development of a media/communications plan. As part of that plan, applicants must provide weekly highlight reports to the ECA Program Office. (For more details, see section C.11. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients)

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):

M&E reporting is a key element of the proposal. It is important that applicants be able to describe the CCI Program's impact on individual participants, their home communities, and their U.S. campuses and communities. Proposals must include a comprehensive M&E plan that includes both quantitative and qualitative instruments to assess progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the CCI Program. Reporting must document progress toward the goals and objectives at multiple points in time, such as at the end of the CCI Program and again at least one or more years after the conclusion of the program. (Please see section C.6. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), below, for additional details. The Program Performance M&E Narrative provides guidance on what should be included as part of the applicant's 20-page proposal narrative.)

Program Model

The proposal must demonstrate how participants will be guided to participate in all aspects of the CCI Program, including the program pillars: Academic Coursework; Practical Education, Service Learning and Leadership; and Cultural Exchange.

Academic Coursework:

The proposal must indicate the applicant's ability to design and offer comprehensive academic-year programs in the selected fields of study for cohorts of approximately 12-16 participants on each host campus. These programs must combine 1) noteworthy host campus academic programs in priority technical fields, preferably with the ability for participants to earn industry-recognized credentials; 2) partnerships with local industry and institutions related to relevant fields of study that enrich on-campus learning through hands-on professional skill-building; and 3) co-curricular, sector-based programming that develops economic and cultural understanding of the local, national, and international contexts of each field. The program shall also expose participants to local experts, industry representatives, and/or practitioners in the field and help participants plan their future professional pursuits.

Participants may apply for, and be placed in, one of several priority academic fields of study and training. Recent fields of study have included the following:

- Agriculture
- Applied Engineering
- Business and Entrepreneurship
- Creative Economy and Media
- Early Childhood Education
- Information Technology

Within the fields of study selected, participants would take courses in a range of subfields, for example agricultural management, manufacturing technology, logistics/global supply chain management, digital media, and cybersecurity. Proposals may include different fields of study than those listed and should provide a thorough explanation of any new field, its global

workforce demand, and how it would align with U.S. foreign policy priorities. ECA reserves the right to add or remove eligible fields of study and subfields prior to each recruitment cycle.

The proposal must summarize the consortium's overall capacity to host participants in and across all fields while also providing a comprehensive summary of the specific field offerings at each proposed host campus. These summaries will guide the recruitment and placement phases of the program. Individual candidates will apply to participate in a specific field and subfield of study. Following the placement process, permission from ECA must be granted for a participant to change their field of study.

Programs of study that lead to a certificate or professional qualification in an eligible field of study are strongly preferred. Proposals shall explain language requirements for certificate eligibility. The proposal shall include a summary of certificate and other qualification options available within the proposed time frame in each field of study at each campus. The proposal must also include an overview of academic program options for participants who will not be eligible or able to complete a certificate within the prescribed program time frame.

Proposals must describe plans to facilitate experiential learning in each field of study at each host campus. For example, proposals from a campus that would host in the field of information technology (IT) will provide examples of potential local IT internships and service-learning opportunities, as well as programming that exposes participants to local IT leaders, experts, and/or practitioners in that field who can enrich participants' understanding of IT in local, national, or international contexts.

In addition to professional skill-building within an academic field, the proposal must also describe plans to increase participants' employability upon their return home, expose them to the U.S. entrepreneurial mindset, and prepare them to apply what they have learned to economic contexts in their home countries.

Practical Education:

Proposals shall describe what practical education opportunities will be available to them during the program (i.e., internship, cooperative education) directly related to their fields of study and/or career plans. This component is intended to provide participants with practical experience in their field of study and help them develop professional and soft skills that are necessary in the workplace. Host colleges must provide support and monitoring of this process and outline it clearly within the proposal. Participating colleges may offer this opportunity for academic credit.

Service Learning and Leadership:

Proposals shall describe how the program will provide participants with opportunities to volunteer at an organization or on a project or program within a framework of service learning. This program pillar shall be designed to introduce participants to volunteerism as an American cultural value, to expose participants to U.S. work culture and opportunities for networking, and to foster participant engagement within their local communities. Service learning could also

strengthen field of study programming and practical education components. The proposal must describe how the program will improve the leadership skills of CCI participants to enhance their capacities as emerging young leaders and to prepare them to share what they have learned with their communities upon return home.

Cultural Exchange:

The proposal must explain how participants will engage in enrichment activities and shall include creative ideas for exposing participants broadly throughout the academic program to U.S. institutions, society, and culture. Past examples include, but are not limited to, attendance at school board or city council meetings, concerts or plays, and visits to local museums or cultural sites. The proposal must include a program component that matches participants with U.S. friendship families, mentors, or peers to facilitate the development of personal friendships and exposure to U.S. culture.

4. Recipient Responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

Host Institution Selection and Oversight:

1. Identify and propose a consortia/combination of community colleges that collectively provides offerings in all eligible fields of study. Obtain approval of ECA's program officer on final host campuses;
2. Manage and oversee program planning and implementation at each host campus. Train campus administrators to ensure consistency of program quality and implementation of administrative procedures (i.e., communications, incident response, reporting, etc.) across campuses.
3. Monitor, assess, and report to ECA's program officer regarding host campus performance;

Recruitment, Selection, and Placement:

1. Establish a system for receiving candidate applications nominated by the U.S. embassy or Fulbright Commissions, review each application for technical eligibility, and manage review of each candidate for medical clearance;
2. Create and maintain an up-to-date file on each selected participant;
3. Follow up with the U.S. embassies and Fulbright Commissions regarding missing documents and respond to their inquiries, copying the appropriate program officer in ECA;
4. Review candidate dossiers and determine the best campus placement for each participant that will meet his/her academic and professional goals;
5. Ensure that final placements establish cohorts of approximately 12-16 participants at each host campus that are multinational and balanced between male and female. It is ECA's intention that no more than 25% of the campus participants be from the same country;
6. Obtain approval of ECA's program officer on final candidate selection and assist program officer with communicating approved placements to the Public Affairs Sections of the U.S. embassies or Fulbright Commissions in the partner countries;

Pre-departure Support and Programming:

1. Prepare and distribute pre-departure materials for U.S. embassies or Fulbright Commissions to use during their in-country pre-departure orientations and coordinate virtual participation of consortia and ECA representatives in these events;
2. Prepare pre-departure materials for individual participants that describe program components, participation expectations, and preparation guidelines, and oversee the dissemination of these materials to participants through U.S. embassies or Fulbright Commissions;
3. Coordinate and deliver pre-program virtual academic coursework to prepare participants for the academic program;
4. Ensure that each participant signs a Terms and Conditions document (approved by ECA) and completes all other requirements and necessary pre-travel paperwork;
5. Identify resources for pre-departure virtual and/or in-country English language learning and coordinate proposed opportunities;
6. Prepare and send the DS-2019 forms as soon as possible after placement, and at least 60 days before departure, to facilitate the visa application and adjudication process;
7. Notify the U.S. embassies and Fulbright Commissions of each candidate's proposed U.S. arrival date and the date for sending travel itineraries for each participant;
8. Arrange round-trip travel for the participants from their home cities to their U.S. host institutions that is compliant with the Fly America Act and send this itinerary along with general travel information to each participant and the respective nominating U.S. embassy or Fulbright Commission;
9. Coordinate pre-departure communication between campus program coordinators and individual participants regarding pre-existing physical or mental health needs to facilitate pre-departure preparations and appropriate accommodations, as needed;

Program Planning and Participant Monitoring:

1. Arrange housing for each participant in conjunction with host campuses and share rules and regulations for housing with participants;
2. Ensure that each participant receives an orientation upon arrival in the United States;
3. Enroll participants in ECA's Accident and Sickness Plan for Exchanges (ASPE) health benefits plan or alternative plan that meets J-1 visa requirements and is approved by ECA, advise participants about the benefits plan, and assist with claims as necessary;
4. Monitor participants' adjustment, health and well-being, and program performance. Oversee the coordination and implementation of health and safety protocols and procedures between all individual host campuses and the administrative partner. Manage participant issues and emergencies at all times in coordination with ECA's program office, and submit participant incident report forms, as needed, based on ECA policy guidelines;
5. Assist participants in developing an individual development plan;
6. Develop and facilitate programming that will increase participants' employability and assist them in applying for, obtaining, and participating in a professional internship directly related to the participants' field of study;
7. Assist participants in contributing to service learning opportunities and developing leadership skills;

8. Develop and facilitate educational and cultural enrichment activities;
9. Plan and implement at least one CCI-program event that facilitates participant personal and professional development and helps participants maximize their CCI experiences;
10. Assist participants in preparing for re-entry and their transitions upon return home;
11. Manage and monitor the J-1 visa duration and SEVIS status of the participants;
12. Manage financial aspects of the program including participant maintenance allowances, housing allowances, accident and sickness benefits, host university agreements, taxes, and other activity costs;
13. Assume overall responsibility for complying with all applicable tax treaties and federal, state, and local laws on tax withholding and reporting for participants;

M&E, Reporting, and Branding:

1. In close consultation with ECA's program officer, assess the program and its impact on the participants, their host communities, and their host institutions during their stay in the United States and after they return to their home countries;
2. Report programmatic, financial, and statistical information to ECA's program officer and respond fully and promptly to requests for information relating to the participants and alumni.
3. Promote CCI-wide branding and administer CCI websites and social media properties cooperatively with ECA in compliance with ECA Communication Guidelines;
4. Ensure participants have signed a release form that states whether they approve or do not approve the use of their photos or quotes in publications related to the CCI Program;

Alumni Programming and Ongoing Engagement:

1. Track and maintain updated lists of alumni and facilitate follow-on activities with alumni after they return home;
2. Identify and/ or create opportunities for alumni to enhance their professional skills and career advancement.

5. Goals and Objectives.

Competitive proposals will demonstrate an understanding of the program's current goals, model, and required components.

The program goals are to:

- Equip exchange participants with professional and technical skills in fields of study that address 21st century workforce demands and align with U.S. foreign policy priorities;
- Expand future academic and employment opportunities for emerging foreign leaders in strategic countries at risk of radicalization/illegal immigration;
- Prepare participants to contribute to economic stability in their local communities upon their return home as alumni;
- Promote internationalization efforts on U.S. community college campuses and contribute to U.S. students' preparedness for successful futures in a global marketplace.

The program objectives for participants are to:

- Demonstrate increased technical knowledge and professional skills in their chosen field of study through academic coursework, professional internships, and other experiential learning;
- Demonstrate increased confidence and ability in their personal, professional, and leadership skills to enhance their employability and/or prospects for economic success;
- Demonstrate improvement in their level of proficiency in English that will serve as a springboard to opportunity;
- Demonstrate a better understanding of community engagement as practiced within their multinational campus cohorts and in their host communities in the United States;
- Demonstrate a better understanding of the values, society, institutions, and culture of the United States; and
- Demonstrate an increased ability to be a leader and difference-maker that is committed to return home to share what they learned and contribute to their local communities.

The program objectives for community colleges are to:

- Increase institutional capacity thereby improving institutional support systems, student experiences, and ultimately the capacity to recruit international short term and degree-seeking students;
- Increase understanding of emerging industries on a global level and programs that could address skills gaps in key sectors;
- Internationalize on-campus opportunities for U.S. students to gain global competencies and ultimately to increase the job skills and mobility of U.S. community college students.

6. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

Distinct from grants or cooperative agreement monitoring and participant monitoring, performance monitoring is designed to assess progress against a program's goals and objectives. A performance monitoring framework is vital to tracking the direction, pace, and magnitude of change that result from ECA programs.

ECA created the Monitoring Data for ECA (MODE) Framework to measure the performance of ECA programs. **The MODE Framework provides standard indicators and corresponding survey questions to ensure consistent measures across all ECA programs.** More resources and guidance documents on the MODE Framework are available online at:

<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>.

The proposal must include the MODE Framework objectives and indicators listed below (note that, because not all MODE objectives and indicators are relevant for a program, the numbering below will not be sequential). In addition to the ECA-required objectives and indicators, applicants may also select additional MODE Framework indicators (see the **Indicator Book** on the MODE Framework website), or design custom objectives and indicators that are specific to the proposed program and this proposal.

- Demographic Questions as outlined in the **Indicator Book** on page vi, and **Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)** (<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and/>)
- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
 - Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities
 - E1.1.01: Percent of participants reporting that their program experience offered opportunities to engage with other cultures
 - E1.1.04: Percent of participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government (core indicator)
 - E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator)
 - E1.1.10: Percent of foreign participants who traveled to the United States for the first time during their program (core indicator)
 - E1.1.13: Percent of foreign participants who are more likely to recommend the United States as a good place to study
 - E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American people (core indicator)
 - E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator)
 - E1.1.19: Percent of participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities/ countries
 - E2.0.01: Percent of foreign participants that volunteer in their host communities
 - E2.0.04: Number of hours that foreign participants spend volunteering in their host communities
 - Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster participant's belief that civic engagement benefits communities/ countries
 - E2.2.01: Percent of participants who have more confidence in their ability to have an impact in their home country (core indicator)
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
 - E3.0.02: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of Americans (core indicator)
 - E3.0.04: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of third country nationals
 - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)

- o Sub-Objective 3.1: Alumni subscribe to platforms for resources and information-sharing
 - E3.1.02: Percent of participants who learned about new resources
 - E3.1.05: Percent of participants who are connected to ECA through a U.S. Department of State-managed platform
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries
 - E4.0.01: Percent of participants reporting increases in their job skills as a result of their program participation
 - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation
 - E4.0.05: Percent of participants who report an increase in technical skills as a result of their program participation
 - E4.0.09: Percent of participants reporting an increase in language skills as a result of their program participation
- o Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
 - E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
 - E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts (core indicator)
 - E4.1.04: Number of professional placements
 - E4.1.05: Number of participants in programs with a media literacy component
- o Objective 8: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau's resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships
 - E8.0.03: Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

Performance Monitoring Plans (PMPs)

ECA recommends the use of a PMP to serve as the primary reference document for performance monitoring for this award. If used, the PMP is an important part of any proposal, as it outlines how the applicant plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions. A PMP document that includes all MODE Framework indicators is a part of this solicitation's attachments. Specific instructions on how to modify the PMP to be responsive to this solicitation are included in that document. While ECA recommends the applicant use the PMP format provided, this is not a requirement. A training on how to complete a PMP is available here: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>. If a PMP is not included in the proposal, applicants should provide similar information to that found in the suggested PMP format, in a presentation of your choice. Successful PMPs (or similar documentation) should include the following:

- Objectives. Programmatic objectives are statements of the condition(s) that state what the program is designed to achieve. Objectives are therefore bound by the resources and timeframe of the program and must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART; see the ECA Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Innovation (MELI) Unit's

pages on the ECA website for more information: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-evaluation-division/capacity-building>). In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the MODE Framework, the Functional Bureau Strategy (<https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau>), or other applicant-designed program-specific objectives.

- **Indicators.** Performance indicators are measures used to gauge progress toward programmatic objectives and sub-objectives. Indicators should be as specific as possible (following the SMART principles) and include any proposed disaggregations (meaning, breakdowns of the data by subgroups, such as gender or country; the PMP lists the demographic questions required to obtain the information necessary to report the disaggregations). Each indicator should also include a target number to be achieved. A target is a planned level of result to be achieved within an explicit timeframe.
 - If you do not use the PMP format provided, note that any performance monitoring reference document the applicant submits should include the information in the column headers (Indicator Name, Definition, Target, Survey Question, etc.) in the PMP attachment at a minimum.
 - In addition to those indicators outlined above, the applicant may propose additional custom, program-specific indicators in the PMP (ECA recommends the proposed PMPs include a minimum of one indicator for each custom programmatic objective).
 - During the period of performance of the award, the ECA program office may further revise, add, or remove indicators. Therefore, the applicant's PMP and data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established.

Award recipients are responsible for collecting indicator data only on participant outcomes during the period of performance of the award itself (see the PMP for guidelines as to when these data collection efforts should occur). ECA will measure outcomes of ECA participants at one, three, five, and 10 years after the exchange has ended to capture the long-term outcomes of ECA programming unless otherwise specified in the NOFO and/or POGI. In this instance, the recipient will be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to de-duplicate questions and minimize potential survey fatigue.

Regardless of the survey platform used, **all** MODE Framework survey questions outlined above are **required** (i.e., should be forced response); please see the Consent Language in the MODE Framework **Indicator Book** for more information on how to convey this to participants/survey respondents.

Program Performance M&E Narrative

Proposals should include information within the program narrative section(s) that outlines how the applicant intends to measure the indicators listed above. This will be separate from the PMP and should include but not be limited to:

- An overview of resources available to the applicant that outline the team structure and responsibilities surrounding performance monitoring.

- The mechanism(s) through which surveys and other data collection tools (if applicable) will be administered, including which platform will be used, and when and how surveys will be advertised to participants – detailing strategies to ensure adequate survey response rates (https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/eca_eval_division_survey_response_rates.pdf), and to reduce selection and non-response bias.
- A brief explanation of data analysis and reporting procedures.
- An overview of a proposed learning plan and feedback loops to ensure that the Grant Officer (GO)/Grant Officer Representative (GOR) are informed on performance monitoring issues at regular intervals.

Nonmandatory Use of the Qualtrics MODE Survey Builder Data Collection System

ECA has created a guided tool (the MODE Survey Builder) within the Qualtrics survey platform for ECA implementing partners to generate surveys to facilitate the seamless collection and reporting of MODE Framework data. The MODE Survey Builder offers implementing partners a guided workflow that will generate a ready-to-send MODE survey, allows the addition of custom survey questions, and offers a standard report template for a quick overview of survey results that can be submitted in MyGrants (see section below) to fulfill RPM Reporting Requirements. Use of the Qualtrics survey platform can be utilized at no cost to implementing partners.

Additional information about the MODE Survey Builder can be found here:

<https://app.box.com/s/jjr98hmx6deorxj3lwgaxjrwdfec2r91> and here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jus4fRqOTcM>. You can propose use of an alternate survey tool or use the MODE Survey Builder, but if you are utilizing the MODE Survey Builder, you must indicate such in your proposal.

MyGrants RPM Reporting Requirements

MyGrants is a database solution that serves as the official system of record for all U.S. Department of State and ECA awards. The Results Performance Monitoring (RPM) module within MyGrants is an extension module that enables users to report performance monitoring data in the same system where they currently manage federal assistance actions. As part of ECA's efforts to streamline data collection and management, the recipient(s) of this award will be required to input performance reporting data outlined in this solicitation into the MyGrants RPM. The data stored in the MyGrants RPM will provide ECA with a bureau-wide, uniform M&E reporting tool that is already linked with other elements of the awards familiar to existing awardees.

7. Allowable Costs.

Cooperative Agreement funded expenditures may include, but are not limited to, the categories below.

Participant Expenses

- 1) Round-trip travel domestic and international travel for participants from home city to the United States, coach class (via American carrier and following "Fly America" regulations);
- 2) Tuition and community college fees;

- 3) Maintenance allowances (estimate and explain an appropriate stipend level).
Maintenance allowances should be sufficient to enable participants to meet the costs of lodging, food, clothing, and incidental purchases throughout the period of the Cooperative Agreement in the locations where the participants will be residing.
- 4) Educational materials including books, scientific calculators, and other professional equipment necessary for study in the participant's field of interest (estimate and explain an appropriate stipend level);
- 5) Costs for practical education and service learning;
- 6) Arrival orientation materials and expenses;
- 7) Costs for a minimum of one consortium-wide event;
- 8) Return travel allowance no less than USD 100 and not to exceed USD 200.
- 9) Advising and monitoring of participants;
- 10) Travel and per diem for senior staff members of cooperating organization to monitor and assess programs at host campuses;
- 11) Costs of academic and cultural support and enrichment activities;
- 12) Costs for disability accommodations;
- 13) Costs for alumni activities;
- 14) Qualitative and quantitative assessments;
- 15) Tax withholdings and services, as necessary;
- 16) Costs associated with registering participants in SEVIS.

Other Costs

- 17) Staff salaries and benefits (each staff member and their position must be listed separately.) Please also note the percentage of their total time spent on the program;
- 18) Communication costs (e.g., fax, telephone, postage, communication equipment, etc.);
- 19) Office supplies;
- 20) Printing and duplication costs;
- 21) Administration of tax withholding and reporting as required by Federal, State, and local authorities and in accordance with relevant tax treaties;
- 22) OMB Guidance 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F Audit Requirements fees;
- 23) Other direct costs; and
- 24) Indirect costs.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

8. Cost Share.

ECA encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in

accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution may be reduced in like proportion.

9. Freedom and Democracy Guidelines.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

10. Virtual Exchange Component.

When changing political, health, environmental, or other similar circumstances require a suspension or halt of in-person activities and where ECA determines that a virtual alternative is appropriate and viable, award recipients should demonstrate the ability and capacity to transition from in-person to virtual exchanges. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project-by-project basis.

11. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients.

All ECA Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

12. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial.

ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as "America250" – a truly global celebration. As the period of performance for this award is scheduled to cover part or all of calendar year (CY) 2026, the applicant may wish to consider ways the program can celebrate America250. Any America250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided America250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

13. Substantial Involvement.

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring, as follows:

1. Identifying the academic fields of study to be offered;
2. Final selection of host campuses;
3. Approval of participant placements and changes to a participant's proposed academic field or institution.

The program office will also conduct routine monitoring of the program activities and provide guidance on the design and direction of the program activities, review of outreach materials, input on the program assessment, as well as participant and program emergencies or special circumstances.

D. Application Contents and Format

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals.

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which contains guidelines for proposal preparation.

1. Budget Format.

Applicants must submit a budget (SF-424A), detailed line-item budget, and a budget narrative. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

The proposal should include comprehensive line-item budgets for the base program year. The budget format should break out costs on a program-year basis. The number of participants that the institution proposes to sponsor should be clearly stated. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with funding availability and the needs of the program.

A clear and cogent budget narrative must accompany the line-item budget to explain and justify each line item and demonstrate how cost estimates were derived. In addition, the budget notes or narrative should indicate how the organization will monitor and track expenditures throughout the Cooperative Agreement to avoid under- or over-expenditure.

As with other exchange programs, ECA is committed to containment of costs consistent with overall program objectives and sound management. All costs funded by ECA must be reasonable and appropriate.

2. Content of Application.

Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for information about the application and formatting guidelines.

E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. Address to Request Application Package.

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov> or from ECA website at <https://www.state.gov/eca-grant-opportunities/>.

2. Department of State Contacts.

For questions about this announcement, contact: Matt Sacco, Program Officer, U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Educational Programs, ECA/A/S, 202-975-3074, SaccoMJ@state.gov.

All correspondence with ECA concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation. Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

The terms and conditions published in this solicitation are binding and may not be modified by any ECA representative. Explanatory information provided by ECA that contradicts published language will not be binding.

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

Required Registrations

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov.

A 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. An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from this NOFO.

The 2 CFR 200 requires subrecipients to obtain a UEI. Please note the UEI for subrecipients is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a subrecipient.

Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.

Organizations based in the United States or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain a current registration in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting is completed on any issued award. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:

<https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>

Exemptions

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See [2 CFR 25.110](#) for a full list of exemptions.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

4. Required Registration with MyGrants.

All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's MyGrants system by accessing <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com> and clicking the "create an account" link. MyGrants is the U.S. Department of State's grants management system and is supported by the Department's Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). Recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories that have previously used MyGrants as a U.S. Department of State award recipient do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact the ILMS Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Recipient Organizations and recipient contacts and signatories is available 24 hours, 7 days a week (except federal holidays), and can be reached at 1-888-313-ILMS (4567) or through the ILMS Self Service Portal at <https://afsism.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>.

5. Submission Instructions.

Method of Submission

Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the "Search Grants" portion of the system.

Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures

Eligible organizations should follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants>).

How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

Applicants should read instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

The registration process can take up to four weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines. Applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov. Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration>

How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov

For access to complete instruction on how to apply for Notice of Funding Opportunities on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants>

Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission issues to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays.

Email: support@grants.gov

6. Submission Dates and Times.

Application Deadline Date

Monday, August 4, 2025. Eastern Time Zone.

Applicants have until 11:59 p.m., Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after the application deadline date and time will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system and will be found technically ineligible.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant's Grants.gov Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When ECA successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgement of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that

Grants.gov receives your application. Please also be mindful of any Grants.gov generated error messages that may appear during the application process as they may result in some documents not transmitting correctly.

Applicants using slow internet should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "Applicant FAQs" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov. Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of the Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting <https://grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility>

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal (<https://www.grants.gov>) to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

7. Funding Restrictions for this Announcement.

Funding Restrictions for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

None of the funds awarded resulting from this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be made available for subawards, direct financial support, or otherwise used to provide any payment or transfer to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

8. Certification Regarding Compliance with applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws

If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this NOFO will be within the United States, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:

- 1) Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code and;

- 2) It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

9. Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements.

Applicants are advised that institutions of higher education (IHEs) must certify the following at the time of award, and that this certification requirement must be included in any subaward agreements to IHEs:

- Its compliance in all respects with section 1011f of title 20, United States Code, and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements is material for purposes of section 3729 of title 31, United States Code, and for receipt of appropriate Federal grant funds.

10. Other Submission Requirements.

- a. Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov.
- b. All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed line-item budget, and budget narrative.
- c. Key Personnel
ECA recommends that the applicant identify intended key personnel positions via an asterisk (*) or other marking in the proposal budget, budget narrative, or a separate appendix. If not provided in the application, recipients must submit the names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Applicants should also identify what proportion of their time will be used in support of the program. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions.
- d. Intergovernmental Review of Applications
Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

F. Application Review Information

1. Review Process.

ECA will check that all proposals meet the technical requirements in this solicitation. Proposals that do not meet the guidelines, including those under the eligibility section above or in the PSI, will be ineligible for further review.

All *eligible* proposals will be reviewed by the program office before being reviewed by an ECA grant panel. Applications may also be reviewed by Public Diplomacy sections overseas, State

Department regional bureaus, or other State Department offices, as appropriate. All reviewers, including the ECA grant panels, will review any eligible proposals based on the criteria below.

Proposals recommended by an ECA grant panel will be reviewed for compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines, and assessed for risk. Final funding decisions are made by the ECA's Assistant Secretary. Only an ECA Grant Officer has the final authority to issue assistance awards.

2. Review Criteria.

An ECA grants panel will competitively evaluate all technically eligible applications according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered, and all carry equal weight in the proposal review.

- a. **Quality of the program idea:** Proposals shall exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to ECA's mission as well as the objectives of the CCI Program. Proposals shall demonstrate an understanding of issues faced by young emerging leaders as related to the program goals, a purposeful plan for placements and programming, and how to build cohesion across a program implemented at various campuses. The program design shall adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.
- b. **Program planning and ability to achieve program objectives:** Proposals shall clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the CCI Program's objectives and plan shall address each program component. A detailed and relevant work plan shall demonstrate substantive undertakings to administer a program of this complexity across multiple host campuses. Proposals shall be clearly and accurately written, substantive, and with sufficient detail. Objectives shall be reasonable, feasible, and flexible.
- c. **Institutional Capacity and Track Record:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources shall be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. Proposals shall describe the applicant's knowledge of, or prior experience with, international students and visitors, and the applicant's experience in educating students in the targeted subject fields, including information about certificate and non-certificate programs in subject fields. Proposals shall demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs involving the hosting of international students and visitors, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past ECA grants or cooperative agreements. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
- d. **Multiplier Effect/Impact and Follow-on Activities:** Proposed programs shall strengthen long-term mutual understanding and establish lasting networks between participants and hosts that facilitate the sharing of information and establishment of individual linkages. The proposed strategy shall maximize the Program's potential to make an impact on the participants, their host colleges and communities in the United States, and their communities and countries upon return home. Proposals shall provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (with and without ECA support) ensuring that ECA supported programs are not isolated events. Activities shall include tracking and maintaining updated lists of all alumni and facilitating follow-up activities with alumni.

- e. **Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Proposals should have a fully developed M&E plan that includes goals, objectives, and indicators. The plan should be feasible and aligned with the M&E section of this solicitation. Proposals should include a realistic learning plan that outlines how your organization plans to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices. All submitted M&E plans will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided at least the required information outlined in the M&E section of this solicitation and demonstrated the applicant's capacity to carry out the M&E plan.
- f. **Cost-effectiveness and Cost-sharing:** The applicant shall demonstrate efficient use of ECA funds. The overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, shall be kept as low as possible. All other items shall be necessary and appropriate. The applicant shall maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

9. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov.

The Federal awarding agency, 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 (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov.

Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 CFR 200.206, the Department will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

G. Award Notices

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal ECA procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from an authorized Grants Officer in ECA's Grants Division. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by a Grants Officer and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer (as identified in the application) for review and countersignature. The recipient may only start incurring project expenses beginning on the start date shown on the fully signed award document.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding.

Unsuccessful applicants:

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition following the completion of the review process.

Payment Method:

Payments under this award will be made through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS).

H. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

1. 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.

The Department of State will review and consider proposals for funding pursuant to this NOFO in accordance with OMB guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, including the following:

- [Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#) (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
 - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
 - 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 pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).
- [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](#)

2. Reporting.

Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The FAA will specify how often these reports must be submitted. All reports must be submitted in a timely manner. For planning purposes, applicants can expect to provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

a. **Performance Progress Reports (PPRs)** shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual, quarterly, or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. All reports and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this award in MyGrants.

b. **The Federal Financial Reports (FFR SF-425/SF-425a)** must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/post-award-reporting-forms>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the recipient must upload the approved report to MyGrants, in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the recipient's eligibility for future awards.

c. Required **MODE data** (see Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation section) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. MODE data reporting shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. The frequency of these reports will be determined by ECA/P/MELI and the Program Officer. Either a standard report template (if using the MODE Survey Builder) or aggregate data and the raw data file (if Recipient uses their own survey platform) must be uploaded by the Recipient as an RPM Performance Report under the corresponding record for this award in MyGrants.

d. A **final program and financial report** no more than 120 days after the period of performance of the award ends or termination of the award.

e. **Program Data Requirements:** Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with ECA as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

1. Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.

2. Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three workdays prior to the official opening of the activity.

I. Other Information

Adherence To All Regulations Governing the J Visa

ECA places critically important emphasis on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The award recipient will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation
U.S. Department of State
SA-5, Floor C2, Room C2L13
2200 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20522