



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 2026 Youth Ambassadors Programs
Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0018391
Application Deadline: July 17, 2026**

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A. Basic Information

1. Overview.

Funding Opportunity Title	FY 2026 Youth Ambassadors Program
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0018391
Announcement Type	New Cooperative Agreement
Deadline for Applications	July 17, 2026 11:59pm Eastern (Washington DC time)
Assistance Listing Number	19.415
Length of Performance Period	15 months

Number of Awards Anticipated	Eight awards
Award Amounts	Awards may range from a minimum of \$300,000 to a maximum of \$2,100,000.
Total Available Funding	Approximately \$7,954,000 pending availability of funds.
Type of Funding	FY 2026 Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs (ECE) Funds
Funding Instrument Type	Cooperative Agreement
Anticipated Award Date	September 15, 2026

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 these awards for two additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing these opportunities again.

2. Executive Summary.

The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) is pleased to announce an open competition for the FY 2026 Youth Ambassadors program. Proposals may be submitted to implement one, or more, of eight program options outlined in this solicitation. A different proposal must be submitted for each program option, if applying for more than one. You must clearly identify which program option a proposal is for, early in the Executive Summary of the proposal. The Youth Ambassadors program provides groups of youth and adult mentor (select programs) participants from select countries in the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa (AF), East Asia and Pacific (EAP), Europe and Eurasia (EUR), Middle East and North Africa (NEA), South Central Asia (SCA), the Western Hemisphere (WHA), and the United States of America (USA), with a three-week exchange focusing on youth leadership. In addition to participants travelling internationally, exchanges will include U.S. youth and adult mentors participating as peers in U.S. based exchanges. As applicants explore the main theme of leadership,

they are encouraged to showcase creative and transformative application of AI concepts, resources, strategies, and tools. Program participants will apply knowledge gained on the program to implement follow-on projects in their home communities.

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.

- 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.
- 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*, none of the awards ECA anticipates issuing are for less than \$300,000. Therefore, organizations must demonstrate four years of experience in conducting international exchanges in your proposal to be eligible to apply under this competition.
- 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.
- All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed line-item budget, and budget narrative.

- Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization per program option. In cases where more than one submission per program option from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission for that option made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant for that program option.

Applicants may apply for multiple program options under this solicitation. If applying for multiple awards, individual proposals for each program option must be submitted. Proposals may not combine two program options into one proposal. You must identify which program option a proposal is for clearly and early in the Executive Summary.

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.

- a. Applicants who are current recipients of awards directly from ECA should make sure the application discusses any ECA awards that will be open at the start of the anticipated period of performance for this NOFO (please include the award number). Applicants who do not have current awards directly with ECA, please review the information in the PSI, section D, with additional information that must be provided in your application for it to be eligible.

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 Youth Ambassadors (YA) program cultivates U.S.-aligned global leaders and competitive American youth to build enduring international partnerships that serve long-term U.S. strategic goals. Through three-week exchanges in the United States and abroad, the program connects youth and adult mentors from select countries with American culture, society, and institutions. Participants engage in skills development workshops, leadership trainings, community projects, cultural activities, and homestays with local host families. These immersive experiences showcase American excellence and innovation while equipping participants with critical entrepreneurial and leadership skills. Upon return home, participants apply what they have learned to implement projects in their communities.

3. Program Specific Guidelines.

ECA will support six distinct regional YA programs, one YA-USA program, and one YA On-Demand program to engage participants from all world regions and the United States.

The primary program theme is:

Youth Leadership

The program goals are to:

- 1) **Prepare and equip youth leaders** with the skills needed to become responsible, engaged citizens who address community challenges and contribute positively to their societies.
- 2) **Build strategic international partnerships** by creating lasting networks where participants will gain new global perspectives and through showcasing American innovation and leadership, international participants will see the United States as a preferred partner.
- 3) **Promote America** by deepening participants' understanding and appreciation of U.S. culture, history, and founding principles, including free expression and speech, citizen participation in government, and rule of law; instilling pride and patriotism in American youth; and inspiring all participants to continue learning about these topics and to share their exchange experiences with their home communities.

The objectives of the program are for participants to:

- 1) Deepen hard and soft entrepreneurial skillsets such as adaptability, critical thinking, communication, problem solving, and resilience to help participants excel in future academic, business, and civic pursuits;

- 2) Develop program planning and implementation skills; and
- 3) Use technology, including AI, to efficiently and effectively solve challenges.

The exchange format should be age-appropriate and interactive, allowing participants to thoroughly explore the theme in a creative, memorable, and practical way. Additional topics that help illustrate the theme are encouraged. The program aims to advance dialogue and encourage substantive interaction between Americans and citizens of selected countries. All participants should live with host families for a portion of the exchange, and applicants are strongly encouraged to maximize the homestay experience. Exchanges must also include programming for adult participants, including some programming separate from activities with youth, to learn and work collaboratively with host country counterparts to develop their leadership and mentoring skills. Proposals must include a detailed description of the proposed programming for adults.

Proposals must focus on leadership and should also demonstrate how American AI technologies can be used by young leaders to effectively engage their communities.

Each program component should be designed to be flexible and responsive to changing U.S. foreign policy priorities. Participants should engage in a variety of activities designed to achieve the program's goals. Programming should feature substantive community engagement to benefit the largest number of Americans possible. Program activities should prepare participants to implement follow-on capstone projects, multiplying the effects of the exchange.

Applicants must demonstrate capacity to conduct the activities outlined in the application, including expertise in supporting participants from the region for which they are applying. Proposals should also detail applicant experience conducting exchanges for high school students (or college students in the case of YA-EUR).

A successful proposal will also include a detailed plan for alumni activities, engagement with the wider Youth Ambassadors alumni network (in collaboration with U.S. embassies and consulates, hereafter known as posts, and ECA), and follow-on project development.

Program Options:

ECA anticipates awarding eight separate cooperative agreements to design, implement, and manage the FY 2026 Youth Ambassadors program for select

countries in AF, EAP, EUR, NEA, SCA, WHA, the On-Demand Program, and a U.S. outbound program. A list of countries included in each region can be found on the [Countries and Areas page](#) of the Department of State website. ECA reserves the right to add or remove countries from the program as needed. Proposals should include a strong contingency plan to provide in-person, in-country programming for participants from countries that face travel restrictions, if needed, including opportunities for those participants to connect virtually with peers during the U.S.-based exchange programs. The YA-USA award will include the recruitment of U.S. participants for domestic participation in each of the regional and On-Demand programs as well as the design, implementation, and management of international opportunities for U.S. participants. In all cases, ECA will make final participant selection decisions.

ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal project configurations, budgets, participant numbers, and countries in accordance with the needs of the program, current events, and the availability of funds.

Program Option One: Youth Ambassadors – Africa

ECA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for a total of approximately \$1,500,000 in FY 2026 funding to support one or more exchanges for approximately 100 youth and adult mentor participants from sub-Saharan Africa and approximately 50 U.S. youth and adult mentor domestic participants. Applicants should identify within their proposals the number of exchange cohorts they plan to engage in U.S. programming.

In fall 2026, ECA, in coordination with the Bureau of African Affairs, will select the countries for the 2027 calendar year exchange based on regional priorities. ECA anticipates selecting approximately 20 countries to participate. In recent years, participating countries have included Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The award recipient will work in coordination with participating posts to recruit, screen, and nominate the youth and adult mentor international participants.

Proposals should demonstrate the applicant's commitment to working with ECA and posts on recruitment and selection materials and their ability to develop and implement online recruitment applications. ECA, in collaboration with posts, will make all final participant selection decisions.

The YA-USA award recipient will recruit, screen, and nominate the youth and adult mentor U.S. domestic participants for YA-AF. After ECA confirms finalist and alternate participants, the YA-AF award recipient will receive participant information and assume responsibility for all aspects of preparation and programming for these participants. Proposals should also demonstrate a willingness to collaborate with the YA-USA award recipient on additional programming for all U.S. participants to develop a cohesive YA-USA network.

Program Option Two: Youth Ambassadors – EAP

ECA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for approximately \$600,000 in FY 2026 funding to support one exchange for approximately 40 international youth and adult mentor participants and 20 American domestic participants.

In fall 2026, ECA, in coordination with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, will select the countries for the 2027 calendar year exchange based on regional priorities. ECA anticipates selecting approximately 10 countries to participate. In recent years, participating countries have included: Burma, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

Please note, in recent years, the programming for the Burmese participants has taken place in-person within Burma due to travel restrictions. As such, proposals should include a strong contingency plan to provide in-person, in-country programming for Burmese participants and offer opportunities to connect virtually with the U.S.-based exchange program, if Burma is selected as a participating country.

Participants from the Philippines have historically been recruited from the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and surrounding areas. Please note that the specific geographic area for Philippines recruitment will be reassessed annually, as priorities may shift, but applicants should be prepared to support recruitment of participants from this region.

The award recipient will work in coordination with participating posts, to recruit, screen, and nominate the international participants. Proposals should demonstrate

the applicant's commitment to working with ECA and posts on recruitment and selection materials and their ability to develop and implement online recruitment applications. ECA, in collaboration with posts, will make all final participant selection decisions.

The YA-USA award recipient will recruit, screen, and nominate the U.S. domestic participants. After ECA confirms finalist and alternate participants, the YA-EAP award recipient will receive participant information and assume responsibility for all aspects of preparation and programming for these participants. Proposals should also demonstrate a willingness to collaborate with the YA-USA award recipient on additional programming for all U.S. participants to develop a cohesive YA-USA network.

Program Option Three: Youth Ambassadors – EUR

ECA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for approximately \$450,000 in FY 2026 funding to support one exchange for 30 international participants and 15 U.S. domestic participants. Youth participants on this program will be between the ages of 18-22. This exchange will not include adult mentor participants.

Proposals for the YA-EUR program should explore the program theme through the lens of the arts. This approach can include a range of arts such as filmmaking, literature, music, performing arts, and visual arts.

The award recipient will be fully responsible for recruiting and nominating both the international participants and the 15 U.S. domestic participants. U.S. participants should be youth in the same age range as the international youth. Proposals should detail a plan for participant recruitment and selection. ECA, in collaboration with posts, will make all final participant selection decisions.

ECA anticipates conducting this program with participants from Russia. However, should programming with Russians become infeasible due to political or other factors, ECA may shift programming to other countries in the region. Applicants should briefly describe which European country(ies) they would shift to if a program with Russia is not possible.

Proposals should also demonstrate a willingness to collaborate with the YA-USA award recipient on additional programming for all U.S. participants to develop a cohesive YA-USA network.

Program Option Four: Youth Ambassadors – NEA

ECA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for approximately \$450,000 in FY 2026 funding to support one to two separate, single country exchanges. The total number of youth and adult mentor participants will include approximately 30 international participants and approximately 15 U.S. domestic participants.

ECA anticipates selecting one to two countries to participate annually. In fall 2026, ECA, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, will select the country(ies) for the 2027 calendar year exchange based on regional priorities. In recent years, the countries selected for this exchange were Algeria and Iraq.

If Iraq is again selected as a participating country, the award recipient must brand the exchange as the “Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP)” in all program materials for public distribution. As this exchange would be part of a larger IYLEP program, the award recipient will need to participate in monthly calls with ECA, posts, and any other IYLEP implementing organizations to ensure recruitment and messaging in Iraq is coordinated.

Posts in participating countries may choose to amplify recruitment efforts and/or participate in application review, interviews, and selection, when possible, but applicants must be prepared to fully recruit, screen, and nominate participants without significant support from posts. ECA, in collaboration with posts, will confirm final participant selections for the program.

The YA-USA award recipient will recruit, screen, and nominate U.S. domestic participants. After ECA confirms finalist and alternate participants, ECA will provide the YA-NEA award recipient with participant information, and the award recipient will take over all aspects of preparation and programming. Proposals should also demonstrate a willingness to collaborate with the YA-USA award recipient on additional programming for all U.S. participants to develop a cohesive YA-USA network.

Program Option Five: Youth Ambassadors – SCA

ECA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for approximately \$300,000 in FY 2026 funding to support one exchange for approximately 20 international youth and adult mentors and 10 U.S. domestic youth and adult mentor participants. Each delegation will typically include one adult participant per country represented.

In fall 2026, ECA, in coordination with the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, will select the countries for the 2027 calendar year exchange based on regional priorities. ECA anticipates selecting approximately five countries to participate.

The award recipient will work in coordination with participating posts to recruit, screen, and nominate international participants. Proposals should demonstrate the applicant's commitment to working with ECA and posts on recruitment and selection materials and their ability to develop and implement online recruitment applications. ECA, in collaboration with posts, will make all final participant selection decisions.

The YA-USA award recipient will recruit, screen, and nominate U.S. domestic participants. After ECA confirms finalist and alternate participants, the YA-SCA award recipient will receive participant information and assume responsibility for all aspects of preparation and programming for these participants. Proposals should also demonstrate a willingness to collaborate with the YA-USA award recipient on additional programming for all U.S. participants to develop a cohesive YA-USA network.

Program Option Six: Youth Ambassadors – WHA

ECA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for approximately \$2,100,000 in FY 2026 to support one or more exchanges for approximately 140 youth and adult mentor participants from select Western Hemisphere nations and approximately 70 U.S. youth and adult mentor domestic participants. Applicant proposals should identify the number of exchange cohorts they propose to engage in programming. Exchanges will include both youth and adult mentors. Each delegation should typically include at least one adult participant per country represented. For U.S. domestic participants, the youth-to-adult mentor ratio will be approximately 15:1.

ECA anticipates selecting approximately 15 countries for participation each year, and that eligible countries will participate biennially. Applicants should prepare to conduct exchanges in English, French, or Spanish based on State Department guidance.

ECA, in collaboration with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, will finalize the selection of countries for participation in the 2027 calendar year exchange in the fall of 2026 based on regional priorities. Note: Exact participant distribution across the countries will be decided in collaboration with ECA, the award recipient, regional

bureau, and posts in the fall of 2026, but applicants should propose clear plans for cohort country groupings and exchange timelines.

Please note that, in recent years, participants from Haiti have engaged in Haiti due to travel restrictions. Proposals should include a strong contingency plan to provide in-person, in-country programming for participants from Haiti and offer opportunities to connect virtually with the U.S.-based exchange program, if Haiti is selected as a participating country.

The award recipient will work in coordination with participating posts to recruit, screen, and nominate international participants. Proposals should demonstrate the applicant's commitment to working with ECA and posts on recruitment and selection materials and their ability to develop and implement online recruitment applications. ECA, in collaboration with posts, will make all final participant selection decisions.

The YA-USA award recipient will recruit, screen, and nominate U.S. domestic participants. After ECA confirms finalist and alternate participants, the YA-WHA award recipient will receive participant information and assume responsibility for all aspects of preparation and programming for these participants. Proposals should also demonstrate a willingness to collaborate with the YA-USA award recipient on additional programming for all U.S. participants to develop a cohesive YA-USA network.

Program Option Seven: Youth Ambassadors – USA

ECA anticipates providing up to \$1,654,000 in funding for FY 2026. The YA-USA award recipient will organize, manage, and lead open, merit-based competitions to recruit U.S. youth and adult mentor participants for all YA programs outlined in this NOFO (except YA-EUR) for both U.S.-based and overseas exchanges. The ECA program office will facilitate and expects the award recipient to closely consult and collaborate with other selected YA award recipients to ensure that recruitment efforts align with program timelines and themes.

Applicant proposals should describe in detail how they will recruit, screen, and nominate approximately 210 U.S. youth and adult mentor participants for U.S.-based regional YA programs and YA On-Demand, with a youth to adult ratio of approximately 15:1.

Applicant proposals should also describe in detail how they will recruit, screen, and nominate approximately 90 U.S. citizen youth and adult mentor participants for six international exchanges. Each exchange should include approximately 14 youth participants and one adult mentor. Proposals should provide a plan to design, manage, and implement these exchanges, including the proposed destination countries. Applicants should seek to include countries that have demonstrated innovative ways of using technology and AI to solve challenges. Destination countries should represent all world regions. Applicants should include sample calendars of proposed exchange activities.

The program should help participants deepen their understanding of AI tools and their real-world applications. Exchange activities must maximize significant peer-to-peer interaction with locals for both youth and adult mentors. Applicants can propose to incorporate these youth and adult mentor peers as program participants, similar to the U.S. domestic participants selected for the U.S.-based exchanges or explain in their proposals how they will achieve significant peer-to-peer interaction.

Proposals should also include clear plans to collaborate with other award recipients on additional programming for all U.S. participants to develop a cohesive YA-USA network.

Program Option Eight: Youth Ambassadors On-Demand

The Youth Ambassadors – On-Demand program enables the YA program to respond quickly to evolving priorities and major events. ECA anticipates providing up to \$900,000 in funding for FY 2026. Applicants should submit proposals to implement three separate three-week exchanges in the United States focused on the YA primary themes. Following the issuance of the award, ECA may provide the award recipient with secondary themes that should be incorporated into programming to advance specific goals in the selected countries or regions and support U.S. foreign policy priorities.

An exchange may include participants from a single country, from multiple countries, or from multiple regions, to be determined in consultation with ECA and posts, based on emerging events and foreign policy priorities. Applicants should budget for approximately 60 international and approximately 30 U.S. domestic

participants, across the three exchanges. Each group will consist of both youth and adult mentors.

The award recipient will work in coordination with participating posts to recruit, screen, and nominate international participants. Proposals should demonstrate the applicant's commitment to working with ECA and posts on recruitment and selection materials and their ability to develop and implement online recruitment applications. ECA, in collaboration with posts, will make all final participant selection decisions.

The YA-USA award recipient will recruit, screen, and nominate U.S. domestic participants. After ECA confirms finalist and alternate participants, the YA-OD award recipient will receive participant information and assume responsibility for all aspects of preparation and programming for these participants. Proposals should also demonstrate a willingness to collaborate with the YA-USA award recipient on additional programming for all U.S. participants to develop a cohesive YA-USA network.

Proposals should illustrate the organization's experience working in different regions of the world, demonstrating flexibility and originality in programming. Proposals should include examples in which the organization has responded quickly to fast-changing circumstances in a region or country where they had not previously worked. The award recipient must be able to carry out an exchange at any point in the year; however because many students are only able to travel during the summer months, applicants should be prepared to carry out exchanges during the summer months of June, July, and August if requested. Exchange dates and participating countries/regions will be determined by ECA in consultation with regional bureaus following the issuance of the cooperative agreement.

ECA intends to issue one cooperative agreement for the administration and implementation of three exchanges, however, should funding become available for additional exchanges, the award recipient should indicate any capacity to plan and implement additional exchanges.

All Programs:

Except for select YA-WHA programs as outlined above, exchanges to the United States should be conducted in English and take place in calendar year 2027, pending availability of funds. Applicants should propose specific exchange dates within their

proposals, but the exact timing may be altered, if necessary, through the mutual agreement of ECA and the award recipient.

A successful applicant will demonstrate flexibility regarding the number of exchanges, exchange dates, delegation sizes, and country combinations. Based on the program exchange information, and as outlined above, applicants may propose to have all participants travel at the same time or, for larger exchanges, propose two or more different delegations and exchange dates.

Applicants are encouraged to be creative and flexible in making arrangements that will meet the program goals and maximize cost-effectiveness and efficiency.

Applicants may propose a plan to divide the delegation, or delegations, of participants into smaller cohorts for most of the exchange activities to ensure that all participants actively take part in the exchange and that program staff can adequately monitor the safety and well-being of the participants. If possible, applicants are encouraged to hold opening and closing sessions with the entire delegation of the exchange cohort for group cohesion and bonding.

Partner Organizations and/or Affiliates:

Applicants must demonstrate organizational capacity to conduct the activities required in this solicitation in relevant countries. This capacity may take many forms such as a branch office of the U.S. applicant organization, a non-governmental partner organization, or other affiliates/consultants with demonstrated experience in educational exchange that can support the program activities. The award recipient will be responsible for any subaward recipients' activities under the cooperative agreement, both programmatically and financially.

Organizational Capacity and Project Management:

Applicants must demonstrate their capacity for implementing programs of this nature, focusing on three areas of competency: (1) provision of educational programming that addresses the goals, objectives, and theme outlined in this document; (2) clear detail on experience in programming for and supporting the age group of the program for which the organization is applying: college-aged participants for YA-EUR, high school-aged minors for all other programs; and (3) any previous experience programming with people from the target region.

Organizations must demonstrate their capacity to manage a complex, multi-phase program. Applicants must describe the program staffing (individuals by name and

responsibilities), qualifications, structure, and resources. If applicable, applicants should identify critical partner organizations (and/or consultants) and explain their role(s) and their relevant expertise and experience. Applicants must also describe their working relationship with any partner(s), detail the division of program responsibilities between the award recipient and the partner(s), and indicate how they will monitor the performance of any partner(s).

Applicants need not have organizational capacity in all participating countries. However, organizations must have a method in place to assist participants with pre-departure activities such as coordinating travel and lodging for obtaining passports, visa interviews, pre-departure orientations, international departures, and the disbursement of funds for domestic expenses such as travel to the capital city for passport fees, travel allowances, etc.

Post Involvement:

For all programs except YA-USA:

With the support of the award recipient, posts will collaborate on the recruitment, screening, and nominating of participants. All program promotional and application forms are subject to ECA and post approval before dissemination. The YA-EUR program will not participate in participant recruitment efforts, outside of approval of materials. Posts will help facilitate visa appointments, pre-departure briefings, and alumni engagement, though the costs associated with these activities should be covered through the award. The award recipient will be responsible for preparing materials for the pre-departure briefings and providing follow-on support to participants. Once a cooperative agreement is awarded, the recipient must consult regularly with posts in the partner countries to implement the project and coordinate participants' international and domestic travel needs.

For YA-USA:

It is important that the proposal narrative clearly states the applicant's commitment to consult closely with ECA and the relevant posts in the destination countries for U.S participants travelling abroad. Posts will concur on housing arrangements, including host family locations (regions, neighborhoods); represent the U.S. Government while the exchange activities are taking place in the host country; and assist program staff and participants in the event of an emergency. Despite post oversight and monitoring, the administering organization must be able to manage the program in the host country in its entirety.

Participants:

Participants will be recruited, selected, and nominated according to a merit-based recruitment system. Final selection criteria will be determined prior to recruitment in consultation with ECA. ECA, in collaboration with posts, will make all final participant selections and confirm the list of finalists.

For Youth Ambassadors – AF, EAP, SCA, NEA, On-Demand, USA, and WHA programs, participants will be both youth and adults. Youth participants (approximately aged 15 to 18 years old at the start of the exchange) will have demonstrated leadership potential through academic excellence, community involvement, and extracurricular activities. Youth participants should typically have at least one semester of secondary school remaining after the conclusion of the exchange.

Adult mentors will be educators or community leaders who work with youth. The selected adults will have the role of chaperone, exchange participant, and mentor. Each delegation will typically include at least 1 adult participant per country represented, for some countries there may be additional adult participants, dependent on the number of youths travelling. For YA-USA, the ratio of U.S. adult mentors to youth should be approximately 15:1 for domestic and 14:1 for international programs.

For YA-EUR, applicants should outline a plan to competitively recruit, screen, and nominate both international and domestic participants (typically university students, between the ages of 18-22) according to a merit-based system with clear criteria such as leadership experience and strong academic and social skills.

4. Recipient Responsibilities.

- 1) Participant Recruitment, Screening, and Selection – For all programs EXCEPT YA-USA the recipient will:
 - a. Prepare recruitment materials including applications, flyers, frequently asked questions, information session presentations, online application portal, social media posts, and a workplan/timeline for recruitment. The recipient will work with ECA and posts to finalize the materials. Utilizing these materials, posts will conduct outreach to potential applicants, in coordination with, and with support from, the award recipient, as needed and requested. In the proposal, the applicant should outline how they plan to provide support to posts including responding to applicant inquiries and hosting information sessions to encourage applications from the posts' target demographics. Posts will determine how active of a role they play in

these sessions closer to the time of the exchange.

- i. For the YA-EUR award only: The award recipient will conduct all participant recruitment, in consultation with ECA and post(s). As the YA-EUR program focuses on college aged participants, the YA-EUR award recipient will also recruit the U.S. participants for domestic participation in the YA-EUR program.
- b. House the online application form and subsequent program applicant data on a secure, private, password protected platform or website that is accessible only to the award recipient, participating posts, and the ECA Program Officer(s). The award recipient should provide alternative application methods for applicants with limited internet access.
- c. Conduct an initial review of applications for eligibility criteria and completeness, prior to posts reviewing application materials.
- d. Provide posts with all applications received, a suggested list of candidates to interview, sample interview questions, a scoring mechanism for interviews (including an assessment of English language skill where necessary), and plan to assist posts to create finalist lists for presentation to ECA.
- e. Develop, in coordination with ECA and posts (where applicable), a transparent interview plan and formal process for selection that includes a consistent scoring mechanism and clearly identified evaluation criteria.
- f. Present a post approved list of potential participants and alternates to ECA for final selection.

2) Participant Recruitment, Screening, and Selection – For YA-USA:

- a. Conduct open recruitment and competitive, merit-based selection of U.S. citizen high school aged youth and adult mentor participants for U.S. domestic programs (except YA-EUR) and international exchanges, in close consultation with ECA.
- b. Obtain ECA approval of all publicity and outward facing materials.
- c. Closely consult and collaborate with ECA and any other selected Youth Ambassador award recipients to ensure that recruitment efforts align with program timelines and themes.
- d. Develop, in coordination with ECA, a merit-based selection process that includes a formal process for selection with a consistent scoring mechanism and clearly identified evaluation criteria.
- e. Develop web-based applications for participants in consultation with, and approval from, ECA. The award recipient should provide alternative application methods for applicants with limited internet access.

- f. Recommend the final participants and alternates for approval. No invitations may be issued without ECA clearance.

3) Preparation:

- a. In collaboration with ECA, coordinate with all participants before the program to provide them with program information and pre-departure materials. Award recipients for Youth Ambassadors AF, EAP, NEA, On-Demand, SCA, and WHA should be prepared to incorporate American domestic participants into all aspects of preparation, exchange, and post exchange activities after selection is confirmed by ECA.
- b. Collect medical information from the participants and ensure that each participant has submitted any health documents necessary for the program.
- c. For the foreign participants, facilitate the passport and J-1 visa application process, in collaboration with ECA and posts, before the beginning of travel to the United States. This includes coordinating, and budgeting for travel for passport applications and visa interviews, as necessary. When possible, J-1 visas should be applied for approximately 90 days prior to travel to the United States.
 - i. Applicants should budget for in-country travel for finalists to obtain visas in advance of their departure dates. In some countries, such as the Philippines, travel documentation from local government is necessary. In these cases, travel to obtain this documentation should be included in costs.
 - ii. Third-country travel may be required for participant visa applications in certain countries depending on the security situation.
 - iii. Detail a plan for providing funds to participants to cover their required pre-program costs.
- d. Facilitate, and budget for, the identification needs of U.S. domestic participants. This includes coordinating and budgeting for TSA approved identification for domestic participants (all programs, except YA-USA).
- e. Facilitate the passport and visa application process for the U.S. outbound participants before the beginning of travel to their destination country. This includes coordinating, and budgeting for, passports and travel for any necessary visa interviews (YA-USA only).
- f. Identify an individual to serve as Alternate Responsible Officer to issue DS-2019 forms. All foreign participants will travel on a U.S. Government designation for the J Exchange Visitor Program with ECA as the sponsor.

ECA can provide training for that individual, upon request (all programs, except YA-USA).

- g. Enroll foreign participants and U.S. participants travelling internationally in the Bureau's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) benefits plan for the duration of the exchange and assist with claims as necessary. ECA can provide training for this task, upon request.
- h. Ensure all U.S. participants travelling internationally are enrolled in STEP on travel.state.gov.
- i. Prepare physical emergency contact information cards for all participants. Participants must receive cards prior to traveling.
- j. For international participants, in collaboration with posts (where possible) deliver pre-departure orientation materials covering key program objectives, themes, expectations, intercultural training, preparation for homestays and a general introduction to the United States, including political, historical, educational, and cultural aspects.
- k. Make all round-trip international and domestic travel arrangements for participants (complying with the Fly America Act), in consultation with posts and include appropriate costs in the budget. Provide assistance for participants during travel (as needed).
- l. Arrange for ground transport.

4) Exchange Activities:

- a. Design, plan, and implement approximately three weeks of exchange activities that develop the participants leadership skills, as well as a deeper understanding of the American people, culture, and traditions. The exchanges should include creative and interactive activities, practical experiences, and other hands-on opportunities that provide substantive experience on the program themes and topics. Activities should be educational both for the exchange participants and their hosts and peers.
 - i. For YA-EUR, this should be through an arts focused lens.
 - ii. For YA – On-Demand, applicants should be prepared for secondary themes to be identified by ECA closer to the exchange.
 - iii. For YA-WHA, applicants should demonstrate capacity to provide the program in either English or Spanish language exchanges for participants from Central America and the Dominican Republic based on State Department guidance. This should include identifying host families that have some Spanish language skills.

Proposals should provide a French language program for participants from Haiti. This should include identifying host families that have some French language skills. All other YA-WHA exchanges should be conducted in English.

- b. Incorporate into exchange activities ways AI can provide creative solutions and efficient problem solving, in line with program themes and objectives. Exchange activities should include visits to American companies and organizations that are using AI tools effectively in their operations to identify and solve real world challenges.
- c. Support development of capstone projects to multiply the impact of the program. The ideas and plans should come from the participants, but the award recipient project staff should be prepared to assist the participants in developing these plans during the exchanges and a follow-on period outlined in the proposal.
- d. In addition to a visit to Washington, D.C., identify one or two host community locations per cohort where participants will spend time during their exchange to foster connections with a variety of Americans.
 - i. Organizations should describe the rationale for these location selections in their proposals.
 - ii. ECA encourages applicants to consider access to businesses and organizations that can further program learning objectives.
- e. Provide ECA with a calendar of exchange activities at least two weeks prior to the exchange.
- f. Manage all logistical arrangements, including on- program domestic travel, ground transportation, accommodations, group meals, and disbursement of any funds.
- g. Conduct a welcome orientation for participants upon arrival for their exchange in the United States, or their host country (in the case of YA-USA overseas participants). The orientation should include a general political, historical, educational, and cultural introduction to their host communities and/or their host countries, a review of the objectives of the program, and practical and administrative information. During this orientation award recipients must ensure that participants are in possession of the printed emergency contact card.
- h. Ensure program flexibility, as plans may need to be adjusted once the award has been made due to the variety of countries and varying academic calendars.
- i. Provide opportunities, outside of joint activities with youth participants, for the adult mentors to work and collaborate with their peers and American

professionals, volunteers, and youth advocates with whom they can discuss the support of youth development. For all proposals, programming for adult participants must be described within the proposal (except YA-EUR, which doesn't have adult mentors).

- j. Arrange appropriate community, cultural, social, and civic activities.
- k. Make arrangements for interpreters, as needed.
- l. Engage participants in at least two community engagement activities during the exchange. The program should provide context for the participants, such as a discussion of community service/volunteerism in the United States, and a debriefing so that the engagement helps to develop leadership skills and furthers the program goals.
- m. Support participants who may choose to prepare articles/digital media content to share their experiences efficiently and safely.
- n. Provide a closing session to summarize exchange activities, prepare participants for their return home, and plan for their future as Youth Ambassadors alumni.
- o. Include a substantive visit to Washington, D.C. including a half day meeting with U.S. Department of State officials.

5) Participant Monitoring:

- a. Provide day-to-day age-appropriate monitoring of the participants' well-being, taking steps to avoid and/or to handle, in a timely manner, any misunderstandings or adjustment issues that may arise. The award recipient will be required to provide proper staff supervision to ensure that participants have a safe, and pedagogically rich, program. Staff should assist participants with cultural adjustments, provide societal context to enhance learning, and guide participants as needed.
- b. Develop and implement a detailed plan to monitor the participants' well-being, safety, and security during all stages of the program.
- c. A competitive monitoring plan should include the following:
 - i. Information provided in pre-departure materials on safety and the avenues for participants to communicate concerns to staff.
 - ii. An age-appropriate staff supervision plan for when the participants are in hotels and/or dormitories.
 - iii. Screening of host families, as outlined above.
 - iv. Monitoring and support of participants while they are in homestays.
 - v. A comprehensive emergency plan.
- d. The award recipient will be required to provide proper supervision to ensure that the program participants have safe and enriching

programs. Staff will assist participants with cultural adjustments, provide societal context to enhance learning, and counsel participants as needed.

- e. Award recipients must immediately inform the ECA program officer and post about any significant health or safety issues affecting program participants **as they arise**. Regardless of the situation, it is essential that the ECA program officer be notified immediately.

6) Housing Accommodations:

- a. Homestays with local families are an important part of the Youth Ambassadors programs as they provide participants with unique insight into everyday life in the host community.
 - i. In the United States, the award recipient should arrange for homestays for all participants for a significant portion of the exchange period.
 - ii. For YA-USA, homestays, arranged by the award recipient, in partner countries are strongly encouraged for a significant portion of the exchange period to the extent possible.
- b. Provide a clear and detailed host family recruitment, screening, and selection plan.
 - i. Screening must include a visit to the home to meet all members of the household to ensure that the host family can provide a comfortable and nurturing home environment.
 - ii. Ensure participants are afforded private space in the home. Exchange participants may share a room with someone of a similar age and the same sex; each participant must have their own bed.
 - iii. Award recipients may place participants with host families as single participants or in pairs.
 - iv. Ensure host families have adequate resources to undertake hosting obligations, and adequate time to spend with participants.
 - v. For American host families, criminal background checks, including a search of the U.S. Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry, must be conducted for members of host families (and others living in the home or visiting during the time of the exchange) who are 18 years or older.
 - vi. A country specific screening process for host families for participants travelling outside of the U.S. should approximate this process as closely as possible, and award recipients should consult with the applicable posts on host family locations (regions, neighborhoods).
- c. The award recipient must provide the families an orientation prior to their

exchange participants' arrival, that emphasizes the program's goals, detailed information on the exchange program, the parameters of their participation, duties and obligations, and information on cultural differences and practices.

- d. The award recipient will arrange dormitory, hotel, or other housing with appropriate program support for other segments of the program, such as the welcome orientation, the Washington, DC visit, the closing session, or special workshops.

7) Follow-on Activities:

- a. Plan, organize, and manage, in close collaboration with ECA and posts (where applicable), follow-on activities in the participants' home communities by facilitating continued engagement among the participants; advising and supporting them in the implementation of a capstone project; encouraging use of AI where appropriate, and offering opportunities to reinforce the ideas and skills learned during the exchange. Exchange participants should return home from the exchange prepared to conduct projects that serve a need in their schools or communities. Follow-on activities may include a virtual component, taking into account connectivity issues that may be present in some participating countries. Applicants should propose a robust plan to assist the participants in developing and carrying out follow-on projects with maximum positive effect to the community.
- b. Support alumni in making presentations or preparing articles/digital media content to share their experiences with their home communities as appropriate.
- c. Plan and organize alumni programming.
- d. Communicate and consult with ECA and posts (where applicable) prior to organizing in-person or virtual alumni events to learn of any current considerations/sensitivities and to offer opportunities for participation, when and where feasible.
- e. Invite staff from ECA and applicable posts to events and programs where feasible and appropriate.
- f. Provide the ECA program officer and US Embassy public diplomacy sections (where applicable) with detailed summaries of alumni activities/events in a timely fashion (no later than two weeks) following a scheduled activity/event. Summaries should include the who, what, where, when, and why details, as well as highlight the specific outcomes and notable successes from the activity/event.

- g. In coordination with alumni coordinators at posts (where applicable) and with ECA's alumni team, connect program participants with alumni from previous program years, the wider Youth Ambassadors network, and from other U.S. Government sponsored programs (where possible). These connections may help participants reintegrate into their home communities post-exchange as well as build and strengthen the alumni network.
- h. YA-USA award recipients should be prepared to propose ideas to engage all U.S. Youth Ambassadors alumni to foster a strong U.S. alumni network. These activities should be coordinated with other Youth Ambassadors award recipients to avoid overlap with regional program alumni activities.
- i. All alumni contact information gathered by the award recipients on behalf of this program must be made available to the Department of State. Please refer to the PSI for additional guidance.

8) Performance Monitoring and Evaluation:

- a. Design a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) that outlines plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions. Please see section 5. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation of the NOFO for more information. Note that not all indicators included in Section 5 will be collected for all programs (for example, indicators requiring data be collected from foreign participants will not be required for the YA-USA award recipient). In the proposal, please include all relevant indicators from Section 5 below and any custom indicators you would like to include. During the negotiation process of the selected offeror, the ECA Program Officer and ECA's monitoring and evaluation staff will review and finalize in collaboration with the offeror.

9) Communication:

- a. Prepare and share program and/or alumni highlights and success stories in a timely fashion with the ECA program officer and relevant posts (where applicable).
- b. Present a communications plan for keeping ECA and posts informed of program progress, including programmatic and/or participant concerns/issues, as well as alumni activities and success stories.
- c. Coordinate digital engagement for the program in coordination with ECA and posts in accordance with ECA's communications and social media guidelines to ensure media is appropriate for the program's level of sensitivity and maintains the online security of those involved.

10) Administrative:

- a. Work in consultation with ECA and posts on the program implementation, providing timely progress reports to ECA and posts, and complying with financial and program reporting requirements and ECA directives.
- b. Provide all printed or web-based program materials, including applications, program-wide communications with posts, and publicity materials to ECA for approval.
- c. Accommodate ECA site visit requests.
- d. Recipients will send at least one organization representative (and not more than two) to attend the in-person, two-day ECA Youth Programs annual meeting in Washington, DC, every year.
- e. Manage all financial aspects of the program.
- f. Participate in regular program reviews with the ECA program officer to assess program implementation and identify matters of concern or improvement. The award recipient should provide the ECA program officer brief monthly email updates outlining general programmatic activities conducted during the past month and anticipated programmatic activities to be conducted the following month.
- g. Submit proposed changes to staffing plans and/or key personnel to the ECA program and grants officers for approval.
- h. Respond fully and promptly to requests for program information from the ECA program office.
- i. Inform, and consult with, ECA about any program or participant problems, emergencies, or other issues, as well as the progress of necessary corrective action.

5. 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://www.state.gov/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/>.

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 v and **Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)** (See the MODE Resource Guide - <https://app.box.com/s/qjo8icwj46tc8h1i1qtg80zl7ibwgtua> – found on our website <https://www.state.gov/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/>)
- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
 - o 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 foreign 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)
 - E1.1.11: Percent of American participants indicating a change in their understanding of their host country's culture and values
 - E1.1.12: Percent of foreign participants indicating a change in understanding of third-party countries' cultures and values
 - E1.1.13: Percent of foreign participants who are more likely to recommend the United States as a good place to study (N/A for YA-USA)
 - 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, NA for YA-USA)

- E1.1.19: Percent of foreign 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
 - o Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster participants' 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)
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries
 - 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
 - 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)
- 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; there is also a support video available for more information on how to fill out the PMP: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBHC1oLNZvl>. While ECA recommends the applicant use the PMP format provided, this is not a requirement. 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). In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the MODE Framework 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; 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 in 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 solicitation. 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://app.box.com/s/pn6tavvg7sh064i502fzap49ox63y38a>), 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 award recipients.

6. Allowable Costs.

Allowable costs may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Staff salaries and benefits
- Staff travel
- Application and educational materials
- Participant travel (international, domestic, ground transportation, passport, and visa fees)
- Travel support costs
- Orientations
- Cultural and social activities
- Meeting costs
- Lodging
- Food (primarily group meals)
- Follow-on activities (including alumni events/activities that bring Youth Ambassadors together with other ECA program alumni for networking and mentorships)
- Participant support (to be used to accommodate participants who may require extra support to fully participate in the program, including, but not limited to, those with disabilities or financial hardship)
- Program performance monitoring and evaluation

- Participant stipends for incidental expenses
- Other justifiable expenses directly related to supporting program activities

The budget must include a participant support line of at least \$6,000 to be used to accommodate participants who may require extra support to fully participate in the program including, but not limited to, those with disabilities or financial hardship. The amount included in this line may be higher for larger programs, at the discretion of the applicant.

Travel costs for at least one person (and not more than two) from each organization to attend the in-person, two-day ECA Youth Programs annual meeting in Washington, DC, every year, must be included in the budget."

Please note that there are no fees for the J-1 visas that foreign participants will use to enter the United States. Applicants should budget for program participants to travel to the applicable embassy for visa interviews and should budget to cover the costs associated with participants obtaining passports, if necessary.

Exchange participants will be enrolled by the recipient in ECA's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). This cost of the ASPE coverage does not need to be included in the budget. More information on ASPE is available at [USDOS | Seven Corners Government Solutions](#).

Please refer to the PSI for allowable costs and complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

7. 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 from private or public sources. The Department of State must review and approve any proposed co-funding with foreign governments before finalizing such arrangements. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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 if host country in-person programming is prohibited. In some cases, ECA may request hybrid exchanges, where participants gather with each other in their home country and participate in virtual programming with Americans. In recent years, ECA has requested hybrid programming for youth participants from Burma and Haiti.

ECA also welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange components could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange components is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms. Virtual exchange components will be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project-by-project basis.

10. 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.

11. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial.

ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as “Freedom 250” – 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 Freedom 250. Any Freedom 250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided Freedom 250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

12. Substantial Involvement.

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

- Provide advice and assistance in the execution of all program components.
- Serve as liaison between the award recipients and personnel within the U.S. Department of State, including ECA offices, the regional bureaus, and overseas posts.
- Approve lists of finalists before applicants are notified of their selection.
- As sponsor, arrange issuance of DS-2019 forms for the international participants. All participants will travel on a U.S. Government designation for the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. Program start and end dates will be determined by the ECA program office based on input from award recipients.
- Approve program materials (such as applications, student handbooks, etc.) and promotional materials (such as press releases and website information).
- Represent the U.S. Government as the program sponsor at exchange events, program events, and orientations.
- Review and approve program activities.
- Publicize program highlights and respond to Congressional and Departmental requests for information.
- Perform performance evaluations/reviews.

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 PSI, which contains guidelines for proposal preparation.

1. Budget Format.

Applicants must submit a budget (SF-424A), detailed line-item budget, and a budget narrative. See the PSI section III for more information on the budget requirements. The level of funding available for FY 2026 for each program, is outlined in this solicitation. Budget requests may not exceed the amounts listed above for each program option. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, or activity to provide clarification.

The available funding may be used for participant support and non-participant support costs necessary to implement the program as described in this solicitation. Please submit a comprehensive line-item budget, as stated in the PSI. An explanatory budget narrative must be included and should elaborate on the detailed budget (e.g., how costs were calculated) not simply repeat the numerical information in the budget. The budget narrative is the place to communicate to ECA any information that might not be readily apparent in the budget, such as explaining the reasonableness of costs.

2. Content of Application.

Applicants must submit a complete and thorough proposal that addresses the program's objectives and requirements. Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for information about the application and formatting guidelines.

Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

Proposal:

Executive Summary (One page)

In one double-spaced page, provide the following information about the project:

- 1) Name of organization/participating institutions
- 2) Identification of the program (FY 2026 Youth Ambassadors – 'Region or Program')

- 3) Beginning and ending dates of the program
- 4) Nature of activity
- 5) Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources
- 6) Scope and Goals
 - a. Number and description of participants
 - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
 - c. Fields covered
 - d. Anticipated results (short- and long-term)

Program Narrative

In no more than 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages (with one-inch margins, size 12 font), provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below. In the narrative, applicants should not only describe major program activities but also explain and justify their programmatic choices.

- 1) Vision (objectives, goals, benefits, and the desired outcomes)
- 2) Program and Follow-on Activities: In addition to describing the components of the exchange and how they relate to program themes and objectives, the detailed outline of the approximately three-week exchange should be included as an appendix.
- 3) Travel, Housing, and Other Logistics including a host family recruitment plan.
- 4) Participant Monitoring Plan that is age-appropriate and demonstrates experience working with minors (except for the YA-EUR program which is for college-aged participants)
- 5) Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
- 6) Institutional Capacity and Project Management
 - a. For YA-EUR, applicants must demonstrate their organization's capacity to conduct programming in the identified target country.
- 7) Participating Organization(s): Identify critical partner organizations (and/or consultants) for the program, their roles, and the reasons for including them. Applicants should also indicate how they will monitor the performance of any partners, as applicable.
- 8) Work Plan/Schedule: Outline the phases of the project planning and implementation for the entire award period. Provide a draft schedule of daily activities for the exchanges in an appendix.

Additional Information to be Submitted:

- 1) Detailed Budget
- 2) Budget Narrative
- 3) Schedule of exchange activities
- 4) Letters of endorsement
Include pledges to participate in the program's implementation from significant partner organizations and any receiving a sub-award. Letters from elected officials are generally not advised.
- 5) Resumes and CVs
Resumes of all staff should be included in the submission with prospective key personnel identified. *No one resume should exceed two pages.*
- 6) First Time Applicant Attachments, **if applicable** (please see PSI)
- 7) Please limit appendices to documents that are directly relevant to the program and better inform its design.

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 the ECA website at <https://www.state.gov/eca-grant-opportunities/>.

2. Department of State Contacts.

For questions about this announcement, contact: Program Officer Ashraf Sarsour, U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division, at 703.628.2288, or email SarsourAA@state.gov.

All correspondence with ECA concerning this solicitation 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 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 are 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 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://afsitsm.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

Friday, July 17, 2026

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 begin the submission process through Grants.gov well in advance of the application deadline.

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 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.

a. 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)

b. Prohibition on Funding Activities that Encourage Mass-Migration Caravans towards the United States Southwest Border.

None of the funds awarded under this grant may be made available to encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass-migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. Funds may not be made available for legal counseling on the United States asylum process; and/or for referrals to legal or representation in the United States.

Funds may only be used for cash cards for use in the country in which they are provided or to facilitate assisted voluntary returns and other purposes that do not encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. The provision of humanitarian assistance is permitted.

c. Award activities in a Designated Area of Combat Operations: SPOT Reporting. (Currently Iraq And Afghanistan)

Each award within areas of combat operations or future contingency operation, as designated by the Secretary of Defense (currently Iraq and Afghanistan), over \$150,000 or providing for performance over 30 days must be registered in the Department of Defense maintained Synchronized Pre-deployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) system. Each award shall be registered in SPOT before personnel deployment. The DOS SPOT Program Manager can assist with entering awards in SPOT. Please send an email to

GAOPS@state.gov for information. Information on how to register in SPOT and how to report the total number of recipient personnel deploying under each award will be contained in a Special Provision within each award.

Recipients that do not utilize personnel who are performing a private security function, or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support can be entered through the SPOT aggregate functionality.

- The recipient will request an aggregate count template from the GO or GOR, who will obtain the template from the Department's SPOT Program Manager (GAOPS@state.gov) by submitting an ILMS Service Now ticket here: <http://ilmshelp.state.sbu/> Select "Global Acquisition Request" from the support ticket selection tiles.
- The recipient will complete the template and return to the Department's SPOT Program Manager via Service Now. The SPOT Program Manager will enter the aggregate count data into the SPOT reporting system. The recipient is responsible for updating the aggregate count every quarter by providing updated information via the "Aggregate Count" template to Department SPOT Program Manager for each SPOT award.

Recipients utilizing personnel who ARE performing a private security function; or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support; or who may be eligible for special refugee or immigration status under U.S. regulation must be entered into SPOT individually with all required personal information.

The recipient must enter this information into the SPOT database directly. Unlike the aggregate count process, the Department's SPOT Program Manager does not enter this information into SPOT on behalf of the recipient.

- The recipient starts the process by referring to the DOS Business Rules and registering for an account in SPOT by contacting the DoD SPOT Help desk here: <https://spot.dmdc.mil/>. Include GAOPS@state.gov when reaching out to DoD.

Recipients with personnel outside of Iraq and/or Afghanistan have no mandate for SPOT use. However, if there are awards needing to interact with DoD elements where a SPOT LOA would benefit, then please send an email to GAOPS@state.gov for information, and to consider setting up the awards in SPOT for that purpose. Ensure your GO and GOR are on the email to GAOPS.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel I, whether employed directly or via contract, are required to adhere to post policies and procedures regarding private security contractors. As specific post policies and procedures differ in scope and applicability, recipients are advised to review post policies carefully and direct any questions to the Embassy Regional Security Office through the GO or GOR.

d. 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:

- i. 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;
- ii. 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.

8. Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and Any Other Applicable Foreign Funding Disclosure Requirements for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE).

Applicants are advised that 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.

e. Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan

Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds \$500,000:

- To the best of the recipient's knowledge, neither the recipient, nor any subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor of the recipient or any agent of the recipient or of such a subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor, is engaged in any of the activities described in 2 CFR 175(a);

The recipient has implemented a Trafficking in Persons compliance plan to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175(a) and is compliant with it; and compliance plan must be consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR 175(b)(4) and (5).

- That the recipient has procedures to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175(a) and to monitor, detect, and terminate any subrecipient, contractor, subcontractor, or employee of the recipient engaging in them.

Recipients do not need to submit a copy of the plan. However, they must provide it to the Grants Officer upon request, and as appropriate, must post the useful and relevant contents of the plan or related materials on their website and at the workplace. Recipients must re-certify on an annual basis for the entire award period of performance.

g. Prohibition on Unmanned Aircraft Systems Manufactured or Assembled by American Security Drone Act-Covered Foreign Entities

(a) Definitions.

American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity means an entity included on a list developed and maintained by the Federal Acquisition Security Council (FASC) and published in the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov>

FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system means an unmanned aircraft system manufactured or assembled by an American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity.

Unmanned aircraft means an aircraft that is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft.

Unmanned aircraft system means an unmanned aircraft and associated elements (including communication links and the components that control the unmanned aircraft) that are required for the operator to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system.

(b) Prohibition.

Recipients of funding under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (including subawards and subcontracts issued by the recipient) will be prohibited from:

- (1) delivering any FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system, which includes unmanned aircraft (i.e., drones) and associated elements;
- (2) Operating a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system in the performance of the award; and
- (3) Using Federal funds for the purchase or operation of a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system.

(c) Exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.

The prohibitions described above will not apply if the agency determines that an exemption, exception, or waiver applies, and the award indicates that such a determination has been made. [See sections 1823 through 1825 and 1832 of Public Law 118-31 (41 U.S.C. 3901 note prec.) for statutory requirements pertaining to exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.].

9. 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 should be original, well-defined, and relevant to ECA's mission. Proposals should describe a plan for continued follow-on activity after the ECA-supported program ends, including how to incorporate participants into the wider Youth Ambassadors alumni network, ensuring that programs are not isolated events.

b. Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Program Objectives: Proposals should have a detailed exchange calendar and work plan that demonstrates your institution's ability to carry out the program. The plan should follow the program

guidelines described in this solicitation and should demonstrate how your institution will meet the program's objectives; it should also address the possibility of needing participants to travel to third-party countries for visa interviews, orientations, and/or onward travel. The objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Plans should demonstrate the applicant's experience working with teenagers, or university-aged students for YA-EUR, and provide a plan to ensure robust, multi-channel monitoring of participant well-being.

c. Institutional Capacity/Track Record: Proposals should include the necessary personnel and institutional resources to achieve the program results and should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs and responsible fiscal management. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients, including the timely submission of reports, and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

d. 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.

e. Cost-effectiveness and Cost share: Proposals should keep the overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost share through other private sector support and institutional direct funding contributions.

3. Indirect Costs

If two or more applications receive equivalent scores based on the evaluation criteria outlined in this NOFO, preference will be given to the applicant with the lower indirect cost rate, as consistent with Executive Order 14332, Section 4(b)(iii). This preference will only be applied as a tie-breaking mechanism and does not supersede the primary evaluation criteria.

4. Risk Review

Under the merit review as required by 2 CFR 200.206, prior to making a Federal Award, the Department will review and consider the following risk factors:

- a. Financial stability
- b. Management systems and standards
- c. History of performance
- d. Audit reports and findings
- e. Ability to effectively implement requirements

5. 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 any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313).

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

6. Award Notices

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal ECA procedures. The award or cooperative agreement will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer in ECA's Grants Division 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).

G. 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.

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 proposals for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this NOFO in accordance with 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). For the avoidance of doubt, the Department has sole discretion over the determination that an award no longer effectuates program goals or agency priorities, and this provision

permits awards to be terminated at the Department's convenience, including when it determines that the award no longer advances the national interest.

- [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](#)
- Recipients must comply with all applicable Executive Orders A searchable list can be found in the Federal Register: <https://www.federalregister.gov/>

1. Reporting.

Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify what reports are required and 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:

- **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.
- 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.

- 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's monitoring and evaluation team (R/PPR/DOM)E 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.
- 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:
 - a) 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.
 - b) 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.

Applicants for awards over \$500,000 during the period of performance should be aware of the post award reporting requirements reflected in 2 CFR 200 Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

3. Branding and Marking

The Department of State, its programs, and U.S. Government funding and assistance should be easily identifiable to the Department's global audiences.

Recipients of federal assistance awards must follow the branding guidance published at [Guidance for Contracts and Grants - U.S. Department of State Brand System](#). Branding policy exceptions are outlined in the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual [10 FAM 416, Policy Exceptions](#).

For more information, visit: <https://brand.america.gov/>

H. 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 considered a third party as described in 22 CFR 62 and will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to international participants in this program. ECA will be the sponsor for 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