U.S. Department of State
U.S. Embassy Beirut
Notice of Funding Opportunity: Statement of Interest

The U.S. Embassy Beirut Public Affairs Section requests statements of interest (SOI) from past participants ("alumni") of U.S. government-funded and U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs for funding through the 2023 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF 2023). The statement of interest should be comprised of a proposal from teams of at least two alumni that meet all program eligibility requirements below and a budget (see Section D below for required documents). Exchange alumni interested in applying for funding under this statement of interest should submit proposals with a completed budget to PDBeirutGrants@state.gov by January 30, 2023, at 11:59 PM Eastern Standard time (Washington, D.C.).

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

AEIF provides alumni of U.S. government-sponsored and facilitated exchange programs with funding to expand on skills gained during their exchange experience to design and implement innovative solutions to global challenges facing their community. Since its inception in 2011, AEIF has funded nearly 500 alumni-led projects around the world through a competitive global competition. This year, the U.S. Embassy Beirut Public Affairs Section will accept public service projects for funding under AEIF 2023 that are proposed and managed by teams of at least two (2) alumni which directly support the Embassy's goals and foreign policy objectives, promote shared interests, and benefit local communities. Team members are expected to address a specific theme in the Lebanese community. Such themes may include (but are not limited to) good governance; climate change; strengthening economic prosperity and inclusive economic growth; promoting innovation; improving the digital economy; fostering entrepreneurship; skill building to improve job opportunities; enhancing education and English language programs; protecting cultural heritage, or countering disinformation, propaganda, and malign influence.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Statement of Interest Submission Period Opens: November 15, 2022
Closing date for Submission: January 30, 2023 11:59PM EST
Funding type: Small grant
Proposal shortlists selected: mid-March 2023
**Proposals not shortlisted will be notified by the end of March 2023.*
Final AEIF 2023 proposal selection: no later than June 30, 2023
Expected size of individual awards: Between $5,000 to $35,000
Program Period of Performance and Start Date: The proposed period of performance should not exceed 18 months. Proposal start dates should be **no earlier** than September 1, 2023.
Opportunity: LBNPAS-22-AW-001-111622
CFDA: 19.501

C. ELIGILIBITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants:

The following individuals are **eligible** to apply:

- Applicants must be alumni of a U.S. government-funded or sponsored exchange program (https://alumni.state.gov/list-exchange-programs) or a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program (https://j1visa.state.gov/).
- Projects teams must include at least two (2) alumni.
- Teams may be comprised of alumni from different exchange programs and different countries.
- Applications must be submitted by exchange alumni or a recognized USG exchange alumni association. Not-for-profit, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions are not eligible to apply in the name of the organization but can serve as partners for implementing project activities.
- Alumni who are U.S. citizens may not submit proposals, but U.S. citizen alumni may participate as team members in a project.

Note for Alumni in the diaspora: Alumni in the diaspora can apply for funding under AEIF 2023 from their country of residence **for proposals to be implemented in Lebanon.** AEIF funds cannot be used to fund international travel but can be used for in-country travel. Alumni living outside of Lebanon can work with someone in Lebanon and should list their team members--including non-alumni--under the project team section in the proposal.

2. Cost Sharing

No cost share is required to be eligible for funding under AEIF 2023.

3. Grant Program Themes and Area:

Proposals must address a specific theme that supports any of the Embassy's strategic goals. These themes include: good governance; climate change; strengthening economic prosperity and inclusive economic growth; promoting innovation; improving the digital economy; fostering entrepreneurship; skill building to improve job opportunities; enhancing education and English language programs; protecting cultural heritage, or countering disinformation, propaganda, and malign influence. Proposals that do not address the theme as outlined in the program objectives will be deemed ineligible. All project activities must take place inside Lebanon.

4. Other Eligibility Requirements

Applicants are only allowed to submit **one** proposal.

If the selected grant will be processed with an individual, that individual is not required to have a UEI (Unique Entity ID) number or be registered in SAM.gov. However, should

the grant be processed with an organization that is a partner in the project, that organization must have a UEI, as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Organizations must have a commitment to equal opportunity employment practices and to non-discrimination practices with regard to beneficiaries, without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

D. STATEMENT OF INTEREST SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Statement of Interest Submission Instructions

The required AEIF 2023 Proposal Form and AEIF 2023 Budget Form are included on this posting under the "related documents" tab or can be requested by email from PDBeirutGrants@state.gov.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity;
- The proposal addresses all questions in the official AEIF 2023 guidelines;
- All documents are in English;
- The budget is in U.S. dollars and is submitted using the designated AEIF 2023 budget form;
- All pages are numbered.

The following documents and information are required for the initial proposal:

1. **AEIF 2023 Proposal Form:** Please carefully read and complete the AEIF 2023 Proposal Form. At least two exchange alumni team members are required for a project to be considered for funding. Applications need to provide the name and contact information for the primary applicant, and describe the role each team member will have in the project, and their experience, qualifications, and ability to carry out that role. Applicants need to indicate what proportion of the team member's time will be used in support of the project. The proposal form will request the following:
    a. **Proposal Summary:** A **s**hort narrative which outlines the proposed project, including challenge/s to be addressed, project objectives, and anticipated impact.
    b. **Project Goals and Objectives:** The goal/s of the proposed project need to describe what the project is intended to achieve and include the objectives which support the goal/s. Objectives should be specific, measurable, and realistically achievable in a set time frame.

c. **Project Methods, Design, and Timeline**: A description of how the project is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal/s. This should include a description of the project's direct and indirect beneficiaries as well as a plan on how to continue the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable. The proposed timeline for the project activities should include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events. Applicants may also submit proposed workshop or training agendas and materials.
d. **Local Project Partners:** A list of partners who will support the proposed project, if applicable.
e. **Communication Plan:** The communication plan should include a communication and outreach strategy for promoting the proposed project. It may include social media, websites, print news, or other forms of media intended to use to share information about the project to beneficiaries and the public. Communications should include AEIF 2023, ExchangeAlumni, and U.S. Embassy branding.
f. **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** The Monitoring and Evaluation component of the proposal should outline in detail how the proposal's activities will advance the program's goals and objectives. This should include any outcomes showing a change in knowledge, awareness, and attitudes; improved quality of services; increased capacity at a school, group; etc. Proposals should also include how the grantee will measure the impact of planned activities.

2. **AEIF 2023 Budget Form:** Applicants must submit a detailed budget and budget narrative justification utilizing the template provided. Line-item expenditures should be listed in the greatest possible detail. Budgets shall be submitted in U.S. dollars and final grant agreements will be conducted in U.S. dollars.

   Budget Restrictions: AEIF 2023 does not support the following activities or costs, and the selection committee will deem applications involving any of these activities or costs ineligible:

   - Any airfare to/from the United States and its territories
   - Activities that take place in the United States and its territories
   - Staff salaries, office space, and overhead/operational expenses
   - Large items of durable equipment or construction programs
   - Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments, or entertainment
   - Academic or scientific research
   - Charitable or development activities
   - Provision of direct social services to a population
   - Individual scholarships
   - Social travel/visits
   - Gifts or prizes
   - Duplication of existing programs
   - Institutional development of an organization

- Venture capital, for-profit endeavors, or charging a fee for participation in project
- Support for specific religious activities
- Fund-raising campaigns
- Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation

E. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Evaluation Criteria: The U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section will use the criteria outlined below to evaluate all statements of interest and develop their shortlist. Shortlisted proposals will be submitted for competition in the global AEIF pool and reviewed by a Selection Committee made up of regional and exchange program experts located at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. Panelists will use the criteria below to review and evaluate applications.

Relevance to Application Theme The proposal provides sufficient information on how the activities will support the theme(s) of the competition. The narrative explains any relevant local context the D.C. Selection Committee may not be aware of in relation to this project. Proposed project ideas must be public diplomacy in nature (i.e. not development or military).
Purpose and Summary, Description, and Implementation Plan When developing the purpose, summary, description, and implementation plan, applicants should aim to make all descriptions clear, concise, and compelling. Reviewers will judge the proposals based on the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the community where it is undertaken. Does the project address an important gap of understanding or need? If the aim of the project is achieved, how will existing knowledge or practice be improved? What audience do the applicants hope to reach with this project? How many will participate? How will they be selected?
Degree of Alumni Involvement Projects must include the involvement of at least two (2) exchange alumni. They may be the project team leaders or collaborate directly with PAS in formulating the project. More than two alumni may comprise the team, however, the minimum is two. As the team leaders, the alumni must be closely involved in project planning, implementation, etc. Applicants should ensure that the proposal includes the following information for each alumni team member: first name, last name, e-mail address, exchange program, country of citizenship, and roles and responsibilities.
Participation and Support from Local Partners The proposal demonstrates buy-in and support from the community where the project will take place. Local partner involvement is a strong sign that there is community support and that the project will engage a broad array of experts, such as subject matter experts, community centers, academic institutions, businesses, local/national government, non-governmental organizations, American Spaces, etc.

Evaluation and Impact of the Project A monitoring & evaluation (M&E) plan is pivotal to project implementation and important tracking progress towards the project's objectives and goals. An M&E plan should consider the data needed to effectively monitor progress toward specific outputs and outcomes as well as how that data collection will be accomplished. Well-crafted indicators should be used to understand a program's progress toward the desired results. An M&E plan should be reviewed for the following: • Completion • Applicability and logic of objectives and indicators • Clear approach to monitoring • Adherence to SMART criteria • Feasibility of baselines and targets • Data quality plan • Capacity to implement plan
Communication, Media, and Outreach Plan The project should include a clear plan and timeline for how and when the team will share information about the project. It is important to ensure that the U.S. Embassy gets recognition throughout the process, if circumstances permit.
Budget and Budget Narrative The budget and narrative justification are sufficiently detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities. The results and proposed outcomes justify the total cost of the project. Budget items are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

Disclaimer: This notice is subject to availability of funding. U.S. Embassy Beirut does not guarantee availability of funding by receiving applications under this announcement. Only successful applicants will be contacted.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

The grant award will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this statement of interest request 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.

Payment Method: Payments will be made in the form of electronic funds transfer in at least two installments, as needed to carry out the program activities.

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

Questions about the grant application process should be directed to PDBeirutGrants@state.gov.