

Statement of Interest (SOI)

Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund 2025: Request For Statement Of Interest (RSOI)

U.S. Embassy Accra, Department of State

Opportunity number: DOS-ACC-RSOI-FY25-01

Application deadline: January 13, 2025; 23:59 GMT

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U.S Department of State
U.S. Embassy Accra/ Bureau of African Affairs
Statement of Interest

A. Basic Information

1. Overview

Funding Opportunity Title	Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund 2025: Request For Statement Of Interest (RSOI)
Funding Opportunity Number	DOS-ACC-RSOI-FY25-01
Announcement Type	Initial announcement
Deadline for Applications	January 13, 2025; 23:59 GMT
Assistance Listing Number	19.022
Length of performance period	12 months or less
Number of awards anticipated	2 awards (dependent on amounts)
Award amounts	Minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$35,000 (approximately)
Total available funding	up to \$35,000 pending availability of funds
Type of Funding	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.
Anticipated project start date	July 2025

The U.S. Embassy Accra announces an open competition for past participants (Alumni) of U.S. government-funded and U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs to submit a statement of interest (SOI) to the 2025 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF 2025). We seek statements of interest from teams of at least two alumni that meet all program eligibility requirements below.

The submission of the SOI is the first step in a two-step process. Applicants must first submit a concise 2-pages statement of interest and a 1-page budget with a solid budget narrative justification designed to clearly communicate project idea and objectives. This is not a full proposal and will not result in a federal assistance award at this step.

The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants to submit project ideas for evaluation prior to requiring the development of a full proposal application. Upon a merit review of eligible SOIs, selected applicants will be invited to expand on their project idea by submitting a full proposal application. Full proposals will go through a second merit review before final funding decision(s) are made. SOIs may be submitted for consideration through **January 13, 2025; 23:59 GMT**.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant

Project Performance Period: Proposed projects should be completed in 12 months or less.

The U.S. Department of State will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

2. Executive Summary

The 2025 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) is designed to increase the impact of the U.S. government's investment in exchange participants and programs by helping alumni develop and implement projects that support U.S. foreign policy objectives, promote shared interests, and benefit local communities. Since its inception in 2011, AEIF has funded nearly 500 alumni-led projects around the world through a competitive global competition. Pending availability of funds, AEIF will consider proposals between \$5,000 and \$35,000.

The U.S. Embassy Accra Public Diplomacy Section will accept SOI's proposed and managed by teams of at least two (2) alumni that support themes such as:

- Supporting sustainable entrepreneurship in emerging Industries
- Creating opportunity through education
- Promoting democratic discourse by strengthening civil society capacity
- Protect media freedom and strengthen the journalism profession

Proposals that do not address the theme as outlined in the program objectives will be deemed ineligible. All project activities must take place outside of the United States and its territories.

B. Eligibility

1. Eligible Applicants

The following are eligible to apply:

- Applicants must be alumni of a U.S. government-funded or sponsored exchange program or a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program.
- Projects teams must include teams of at least two (2) alumni.
- Alumni who are U.S. citizens may not submit proposals, but U.S. citizen alumni may participate as team members in a project.
- Alumni teams may be comprised of alumni from different exchange programs.

- Applications must be submitted by exchange alumni or alumni associations of USG exchange alumni. No other organizations are eligible to apply. Exchange alumni can partner with not-for-profit or non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions to implement project activities.

Application requirements:

- The proposed project identifies and supports Mission priorities through public service-oriented activities.
- The proposed project involves **at least two** U.S. Government-sponsored exchange program alumni and needs to specify a team lead. (All alumni and non-alumni involved in the project will need to be included).
- Applications from Alumni Associations will need to specify a team lead.
- U.S. citizen alumni may be included on alumni teams; however, the team must have at least two non-U.S. citizen exchange program alumni. U.S. citizen alumni cannot be team leads on projects.

The U.S. Embassy Accra Public Diplomacy Section will accept SOI's proposed and managed by teams of at least two (2) alumni that support themes such as:

- ***Supporting Sustainable Entrepreneurship in Emerging Industries*** – activities that support capacity-building and networking programs for women and young entrepreneurs in the creative sector.
- ***Creating Opportunity Through Education*** - activities that incorporate critical thinking, practical skills training, and/or experiential learning into the Ghanaian secondary school education system.
- ***Promoting democratic discourse by strengthening civil society capacity*** – activities that identify and initiate programs with activists and civil society organizations focused on democracy and governance, public health, freedom of speech, or economic empowerment campaigns.
- ***Protect media freedom and strengthen the journalism profession*** – activities that increase public awareness of and access to credible journalism and provide training opportunities for traditional and digital media on fact checking, journalist ethics, and countering misinformation to journalists across the country.

Proposals that do not address the theme as outlined in the program objectives will be deemed ineligible. All project activities must take place outside of the United States and its territories.

2. Cost Sharing

We encourage all proposals to include some form of cost sharing. Examples include in-kind support (services, labor, supplies/equipment, or volunteers), a business contributing food, an organization offering a venue at a discount or free of charge, an NGO sponsoring an activity, an expert donating time to facilitate a seminar, etc.

Note that cost sharing is not a requirement.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

All organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid registration in www.SAM.gov. Please see Section E.2 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

Applicants are only allowed to submit one proposal per organization. If more than one proposal is submitted from an organization, all proposals from that institution will be considered ineligible for funding.

C. Application Contents and Format

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

1. Statement of Interest Concept Note and Budget. This includes a two-page maximum concept note that contains all the required elements listed under “Content of Application” below, in addition to a one-page maximum budget table/chart accompanied by a solid budget narrative/justification.

The SOI Concept Note and budget/narrative should be well written and concise, and contain the following information:

Note:

- *Documents must fully be in English*
- *The anticipated total budget amount (in U.S. dollars).*
- *All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12-point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.*

Content of Application

Project title: Choose a concise and/or catchy title for your project which will get the attention of our audience.

Primary Location of Project: Indicate the location(s) of your project.

Project Team Information: The team needs to include at least **two** U.S. Government-sponsored exchange alumni (indicate name, role, exchange program name & year). Include information about any non-alumni team members as well.

Project Goals: State in one or two sentences the overall aim of your project and what outcome or change you expect to see.

Project Objectives: List your project objectives which will support your project goal/s. Project objectives must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound).

Project Design & Methods: Explain how the project is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve your established goal/s. Include who will benefit from your planned activities and how you plan to build on the outcome of this project.

Project Timeline: Provide a timeline of your project activities.

Beneficiaries: Provide the estimated number of direct and indirect beneficiaries. Direct beneficiaries are persons who directly participate in your project. Indirect beneficiaries are usually not directly connected with the project but will still benefit from it.

Local Project Partners: List any partners (individuals/organizations, etc.) with whom you will work to support or implement your project.

Communication & Outreach Plan: The communication and outreach plan should lay out how you will promote your project and through which channels.

Budget Estimate/Justification: Outline how the funds being requested will be allocated and in approximately what amounts, using U.S. dollar amounts. Provide a clear and strong justification for how the funds will be used.

Note: Funding Restrictions

AEIF 2025 does not support the following activities or costs, and the selection committee will deem applications involving any of these activities or costs ineligible:

- *Staff salaries, office space, and overhead/operational expenses*
- *Large items of durable equipment or construction programs*
- *Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments not integral to the project, or entertainment*
- *Any airfare to/from the United States and its territories*
- *Activities that take place in the United States and its territories*
- *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 the project*
- *Support for specific religious activities*
- *Fund-raising campaigns*
- *Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation*

D. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. Department of State Contacts

If you have any questions, please contact: Public Diplomacy Section Grants Team – PASAccraGrant@state.gov

2. Unique entity identifier 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.
- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- **Organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code to apply**

for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities. If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove an NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket (“incident”) with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at www.fsd.gov using the following language: “I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain an NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated.”

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoD in addition to Department of State should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:

NCAGE Homepage:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx>

NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):

[NCAGE Code Request Tool \(nato.int\)](https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx)

Exemptions

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

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

3. Submission Dates and Times

SOI applications are due no later than **January 13, 2025; 23:59 GMT.**

4. Other Submission Requirements

SOI's should be submitted by email to PASAccraGrant@state.gov. The Subject Line of your email should begin with: AEIF SOI 2025 – followed by the project name.

Example: AEIF SOI 2025 – AnyProjectName

E. Application Review Information

1. Review Criteria

Each submission will be evaluated and rated based on the evaluation criteria outlined below.

Quality of Program Idea: The SOI is responsive to program framework. The idea is communicated well and is feasible. SOI's that promote creative approaches to address U.S. Embassy Accra's needs, policies, and priorities are highly encouraged. The proposed timeline is reasonable.

Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants: The SOI should demonstrate the organization's expertise and previous experience in administering programs. If a local partner is identified SOI should briefly describe the partner's role and experience.

Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives: The SOI should clearly articulate proposed program activities and expected results towards achieving program objectives and goal(s).

Budgets: The budget justification is 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.

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan: Applicants demonstrate they are able to measure program success against key indicators and provide milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes output and outcome indicators and shows how and when those will be measured.

- **Sustainability:** Program activities will continue to have positive impact after the end of the program.

2. Review and Selection Process

A review committee will evaluate all eligible SOI applications.

NOTE: All eligible SOIs will be reviewed against the criteria listed above. SOIs are reviewed individually against the criteria and not against competing SOIs. For a fair review, all panelists will review the first page of the SOI up to the page limit and no

further. The panel may provide conditions and/or recommendations on SOIs to enhance the proposed program. Conditions must be addressed, and recommendations should be addressed, in a full proposal application.

Following the review, any successful SOI applicants will be contacted and instructed to submit full applications.

3. 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

F. 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.

These include:

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

- [Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#) (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
 - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
 - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),

- Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
 - Terminating agreements pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).
- [2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT](#)
 - [2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION](#)
 - [2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS](#)
 - [2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE \(FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE\)](#)
 - [2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY](#)
 - [2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS](#)
 - [U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#)