

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

*Bureau of African Affairs, Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs
Africa Regional Services Paris*

Notice of Funding Opportunity: Statement of Interest – ARS Speaker Program

Title: Africa Regional Services Paris Annual Program Statement: ARS Speaker Program

Funding Opportunity Number: AF-PDPA-FY26-01

Announcement Type: Initial

Deadline for Applications: August 31, 2026 (11:59 p.m., Eastern Time)

Assistance Listing (CFDA) Number: 19.040 – Public Diplomacy Programs

Total Amount Available: \$50,000

Maximum for Each Award: \$12,000

Executive Summary

Priority Region: Sub-Saharan Africa

Africa Regional Services (ARS) Paris, part of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of African Affairs, invites U.S. citizen speakers, artists, and athletes/coaches to submit Statements of Interest (SOIs) for inclusion on the ARS U.S. Speaker Program roster. Roster members may be selected for small program specific grants to conduct in-person and virtual outreach across sub-Saharan Africa.

The ARS Speaker Program supports U.S. foreign policy goals in Africa by strengthening security, supporting shared prosperity, and promoting American excellence. In line with the Department’s Freedom 250 initiative marking the 250th anniversary of the United States and the Decade of Sport in America programs are encouraged to:

- Share the American story and 250 years of American excellence in innovation, technology, and culture; and celebrate American achievement in sports.
- Lead the next era of results driven U.S.–Africa partnership.

This Annual Program Statement seeks U.S. citizen individuals with demonstrated expertise who can deliver programs in English **and** either French or Portuguese.

Priority Program Areas include security; economic prosperity, innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship; energy security, and critical minerals; and American arts, sports, and creative industries as engines of economic opportunity.

Selected individuals will be added to the ARS roster following review and interview. Being on the roster does not guarantee funding; individual grants will be made only when a specific U.S. embassy or consulate request matches a roster member's expertise and availability.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Africa Regional Services (ARS) based in Paris, part of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs, Office of Public Diplomacy and Public and Congressional Affairs, announces an open competition for U.S. citizen individuals to submit a Statement of Interest (SOI) to be considered for a small grant as a guest speaker, artist, or athlete/coach. Selected individuals will conduct outreach activities that enhance understanding of the United States in sub-Saharan Africa. ARS speakers generally give professional lectures and seminars, lead artistic and cultural workshops and masterclasses, or conduct athletic camps and trainings. Please carefully follow all instructions below.

This SOI process supports the Department's Freedom 250 commemoration of the United States' 250th anniversary and the Decade of Sport in America. ARS encourages applicants to align their expertise, where appropriate, with the Department's messaging pillars to share the story of American excellence; to celebrate American achievement in business, innovation, arts, and sports; and to lead the next era of results driven U.S.–Africa partnership.

The submission of the SOI is the first step in a two-step process. The purpose of the SOI is to allow applicants to submit their credentials for consideration for inclusion on ARS's roster of speakers, artists, and athletes/coaches who may be nominated by U.S. embassies and consulates in sub-Saharan Africa to reach target audiences.

Following a merit review of eligible SOIs, selected applicants will be interviewed by the ARS speaker team and tested on French and/or Portuguese language skills.

Successful applicants will be added to the roster. Roster members may be contacted by the speaker team when a speaker request from a U.S. embassy or consulate based in Africa for a specific program matches the applicant's skills. Inclusion on the roster does not guarantee funding or a program.

Objectives

Africa Regional Services is pleased to announce that funding is available for virtual and in-person programs. This Statement of Interest outlines our priorities, themes, and the procedures for submitting your candidacy as a U.S. speaker, artist, or athlete/coach.

Programs must be conducted in English **and** either French or Portuguese. Speakers, artists, and athletes should demonstrate cultural cooperation between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa and reflect the strong transatlantic ties between our peoples.

Priority Program Areas

The following priority program areas reflect ARS and Bureau of African Affairs priorities, including Freedom 250 and the Decade of Sport in America and their focus on inspiring audiences with the American story, igniting interest in American excellence, and innovating new forms of U.S.–Africa partnership.

1. Security, and Countering Transnational Threats in Africa

- Countering terrorism, violent extremism, piracy, narco trafficking, illegal mining, and other transnational crime.

2. Economic Prosperity, Entrepreneurship, Energy Security, and Critical Minerals

- U.S.–Africa trade and investment; strengthening business climates and SME growth.
- Entrepreneurship and small business management. Energy security through responsible development of oil, gas, hydropower, and renewables.
- U.S.-African partnership on filling the demand for critical minerals.
- Building resilient supply chains and industrial zones that connect African production to U.S. and global markets.
- Economic and business journalism.

3. Innovation and Shared U.S.–Africa Prosperity

- U.S. leadership in AI, space, medical research, and other frontier technologies; opportunities for U.S.–Africa collaboration.
- Building innovation ecosystems: universities, incubators, accelerators, startup finance, and enabling regulation.
- Digital transformation and the future of work; digital skills and tech entrepreneurship for youth.
- Public-private partnerships and corporate governance that attract sustainable investment.

4. American Excellence and the Foundations of U.S. Prosperity

- U.S. founding principles (Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights) and 250 years of democratic evolution.
- Key diplomatic milestones (e.g., Marshall Plan, Camp David Accords, Abraham Accords) and lessons for current challenges.

5. American Arts, Sports, and Creative Industries as Engines of Opportunity

- The “business side” of arts and sports: creative entrepreneurship, sports management, event production, marketing, and monetization (including digital platforms and intellectual property).
- Using arts, storytelling, and sports programs to promote youth empowerment, employment, and countering violence or extremism.
- Collaborations between American and African artists, athletes, coaches, and cultural institutions that generate jobs, skills, and local economic development.

6. Migration, Urbanization, and Legal Pathways

- Legal pathways to study, work, and travel; consequences of fraud and irregular migration.
- Managing rapid urbanization and rural-to-urban migration: jobs and service delivery.
- Combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons along African migration routes.

- Diaspora engagement and African diaspora contributions to development and investment.

Participants and Audiences

ARS, in coordination with U.S. embassy and consulate public diplomacy sections in sub-Saharan Africa, seeks to engage the public, decisionmakers, civil society leaders, and opinion-shapers at all levels of society, with the goal of broadening support for and understanding of U.S. policies, culture, history, society, and values.

The following types of programs are not eligible for funding under this APS:

- Programs relating to partisan political activity.
- Charitable or development activities not directly tied to public diplomacy objectives.
- Construction programs.
- Programs that support specific religious activities.
- Fundraising campaigns.
- Lobbying for specific legislation or programs.
- Scientific research.
- Programs intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the applicant.
- Programs that duplicate existing U.S. government-funded programs.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

- **Length of performance period:** 1–12 months
- **Number of awards anticipated:** 8-10 awards, depending on amounts and requests
- **Award amounts:** Awards may range from a minimum of \$500 to a maximum of \$12,000
- **Total available funding:** \$50,000

- **Type of funding:** Funding authority rests in the Smith–Mundt Act. The source of funding is FY26 Public Diplomacy funds.
- **Anticipated program start date:** June 1, 2026

This notice is subject to the availability of funding.

- **Funding instrument type:** Grant
- **Program performance period:** Once selected by an embassy or consulate, programs should be completed within 12 months of the award start date.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

- **U.S. citizen individuals** who can lead programs within their area of expertise in English **and** in either French or Portuguese, and who are based in the United States, Africa, Brazil, or Europe. Candidates with a full professional working level of French and/or Portuguese will be strongly considered. Candidates with only English proficiency will be considered only in rare circumstances where the area of expertise is deemed a priority by the Grants Review Committee.
- Proof of U.S. citizenship (copy of U.S. passport biographic page) is required.

Green-card holders and non-American citizens are not eligible applicants. For profit or commercial entities are not eligible to apply. Organizations are not eligible under this APS.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing is not required and will not be considered as a review criterion.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

- Applicants may submit only one SOI.
- Individuals are required to have a Social Security Number in order to comply with Internal Revenue Service reporting requirements.

- Individuals are not required to have a UEI or to be registered in SAM.gov at the SOI stage. Additional registration or documentation may be required if selected for award, as specified in the grant agreement.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Using the SOI form available at <https://forms.office.com/g/NyK95VxSH9>, applicants must submit their Statement of Interest in English and email the required supporting documents at arsspeaker@state.gov. Each SOI must include:

- Area(s) of expertise and proposed topics, with a short outline.
- Foreign language ability (French or Portuguese) in addition to English.
- A brief description of the applicant's presentation style and links to videos of presentations (if available).
- Preferred audiences (e.g., youth, journalists, entrepreneurs, policymakers, artists, athletes).
- Previous experience as a speaker, trainer, artist, or coach.
- Credentials and/or testimonials/brief endorsements.
- A copy of the applicant's U.S. passport biographic page.
- A current CV or résumé.

SOIs must be submitted using the dedicated form available at <https://forms.office.com/g/NyK95VxSH9>. All supporting documents (credentials/testimonials/endorsements, U.S. passport and a CV or résumé) must be emailed to arsspeaker@state.gov. Make sure the email subject line says "SOI" with your full name. Incomplete Statements of Interest will be rejected.

This APS solicits only Statements of Interest for inclusion on the ARS roster. If a roster member is selected for a specific program, ARS will work with the individual to develop a full award package, which may include additional forms such as the SF-424 and a detailed budget.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Review Criteria

Each SOI will be evaluated on a rolling basis and rated on the following criteria:

- **Subject Matter Expertise:** Demonstrated depth and relevance of expertise in one or more of the Priority Program Areas.
- **Relevant Experience:** Prior experience as a speaker, trainer, artist, or coach, particularly with international, African, or diverse audiences.
- **Language Ability:** Demonstrated ability to lead programs in English and in either French or Portuguese.
- **Clarity and Suitability of Proposed Topics:** Alignment of proposed topics and audiences with ARS and Bureau priorities, including Freedom 250 messaging where appropriate.

2. Review and Selection Process

A Grants Review Committee will evaluate all eligible SOIs. SOIs will be reviewed on a rolling basis and may be batched for review on a quarterly schedule. SOIs are reviewed individually against the published criteria and not competitively against one another. Selected applicants will be contacted for an interview with the ARS speaker team.

Following the interview, successful applicants will be added to the ARS roster. Roster members may be contacted by the speaker team when a speaker request from an Africa-based U.S. embassy or consulate for a specific program matches the applicant's skills and availability.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Before submitting an SOI, applicants should review the terms and conditions and required certifications that will apply if a full proposal is requested and an award is made, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include, as applicable:

- 2 CFR 200 – [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#).
- 2 CFR 600 – [Department of State Requirements](#).
- [U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions](#).

2. Reporting

Recipients will be required to submit at least one final program report and one final financial report, and any interim reports as specified in the grant award document. Reporting requirements and schedules will be detailed in each individual award. Applicants should anticipate allocating sufficient time and resources to meet reporting requirements.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the SOI application process, please contact: arsspeaker@state.gov