

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Office of Assistance Coordination
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 19.500
Tomorrow's Leaders Undergraduate Study Abroad Oversight,
Monitoring and Support
Opportunity Number: SFOP0009277

Key Information:

Announcement Type:	New
Date Opened:	December 16, 2022
Deadline for Questions & Notification of Intent to Apply:	January 13, 2023
Application Deadline:	February 17, 2023
Expected Date of Notification:	April 14, 2023
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Funding Opportunity Synopsis

The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) manages the Tomorrow's Leaders (TL) Program, a leadership development program that provides scholarships for students from countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to attend American-style, nonprofit, independent higher education institutions based in the MENA region, and accredited by a U.S. Department of Education-recognized regional accreditation body. The scholarship program targets students from around the region who are academically qualified but otherwise unable to afford American-style higher education. Students are civic-minded and given additional leadership and community action activities to advance their knowledge, skills, and abilities to be MENA-based community and national leaders after graduation.

The Tomorrow's Leaders Undergraduate (TLU) Program provides approximately 60 qualified students with the opportunity to conduct one semester of study at an U.S. university each fall and spring semester. This solicitation will enhance TL Study Abroad Oversight, Monitoring, and Support by: a) providing oversight, monitoring, and support to students studying in the United States; b) providing financial support and travel coordination; c) analyzing, assessing, and making recommendations for improvements to the study abroad component of the TLU program; d) liaising with MENA-based universities and U.S. host universities; and e) recruiting and selecting new qualified U.S. host universities.

All applications must be submitted in English. Complete information on how applicants can submit proposals for this opportunity can be found in Section VI below.

Applicants should read this NOFO in its entirety before writing their proposal and should refer to the full Evaluation Criteria provided in Section VII while drafting all materials.

Eligible Countries and Territories

In this announcement, we seek to support Middle East and North Africa students selected as part of the Tomorrow's Leaders Undergraduate program as they participate in a semester of academic training and civic engagement in the **United States**.

Background Information about NEA/AC

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) offers Federal assistance to groups and individuals striving to bring about positive change in the Middle East and North Africa region. NEA/AC works in 20 countries and territories, partnering with governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), community leaders, youth and women activists, and private sector groups to advance their efforts. Competitively selected projects aim to foster participatory governance, economic reform, and educational advancement in response to local interest and needs. NEA is committed to advancing equity and support for minority and marginalized populations, including in (name of country). All programs should consider strategies for expanding the pool of individuals/organizations/beneficiaries to afford opportunities for as diverse and inclusive a

population as is feasible to bring perspectives based on religion, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, national origin, and age to implementation of the program.

Table of Contents

I.	FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION.....	5
A.	PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	5
B.	ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES	5
C.	PROJECT DESIGN	6
D.	GENDER INTEGRATION.....	10
E.	DEFINITIONS	11
II.	MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS	11
III.	AWARD INFORMATION	12
IV.	SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT	13
V.	ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION	13
A.	ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS.....	13
B.	REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS	14
C.	ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS	15
VI.	APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION	15
A.	APPLICATION DOCUMENTS	15
B.	APPLICATION FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS	18
C.	SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION	18
D.	SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES	19
VII.	FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	19
A.	AWARDS TO COMMERCIAL FIRMS OR FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.....	19
B.	AUDIT REQUIREMENTS	20
C.	COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE FEDERAL FUNDING REGULATIONS AND DOS TERMS AND CONDITIONS	20
VIII.	APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS.....	20
A.	APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA	20
B.	REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS.....	22
IX.	ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION.....	22
A.	AWARD NOTICES.....	22
B.	REPORTING REQUIREMENTS	23
C.	TRAVEL NOTIFICATIONS.....	24
D.	APPLICANT VETTING AS A CONDITION OF AWARD	24
E.	SPECIAL PROVISION FOR PERFORMANCE IN A DESIGNATED COMBAT AREA (SPOT) REQUIREMENTS	24
F.	BRANDING AND MARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTEEES	24
G.	UEI NUMBER REQUIREMENT FOR SUB AWARDEES	25
H.	SUB AWARDEE REPORTING REQUIREMENT	25
X.	AGENCY CONTACTS.....	25
XI.	DISCLAIMER.....	26

APPENDICES *(Posted with NOFO)***APPENDIX 1— Budget Sample Template and Budget Narrative Guidance****APPENDIX 2— Logic Model or Theory of Change Template****APPENDIX 3— Application Guidance**

I.FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) announces a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for Tomorrow's Leaders (TL) Study Abroad Oversight, Monitoring, and Support. With this project announcement, NEA/AC seeks to support approximately 60 (30 per semester) qualified undergraduate students to participate in one semester of study at a U.S. university. This solicitation will enhance TL Study Abroad Oversight, Monitoring, and Support by: a) providing oversight, monitoring, and support to students studying in the United States; b) providing financial support and travel coordination; c) analyzing, assessing, and making recommendations for improvements to the study abroad component of the TLU program; d) liaising with MENA-based universities and U.S. host universities; and e) recruiting and selecting new qualified U.S. host universities.

The TL program provides scholarships for students at the American University of Beirut (AUB), the Lebanese American University (LAU), the American University in Cairo (AUC), and any additional qualifying American universities that NEA/AC may add to the program. The primary objective of the TL scholarship program is to build a cadre of university-age leaders who are civic-minded, intellectually able, and professionally skilled, who will become the community, business, and national leaders of the future. The program intends to nurture leadership skills and the spirit of civic engagement and volunteerism among outstanding students at American-style, nonprofit, independent higher education institutions based in the MENA region.

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Participating in an international experience propels students towards greater acceptance and understanding of an array of different cultural and community perspectives; advances their interest in global issues; and increases their maturity, self-confidence, and self-esteem. In addition, research has shown that studying abroad positively contributes to the development of skillsets related to career enhancement and interpersonal communication. Participating students are more comfortable in unfamiliar environments and are often more appealing to prospective employers due to their experience living overseas and their knowledge of other languages and cultures.

The TLU program provides qualified undergraduate students the opportunity to study abroad in the United States for one semester. Because students rely heavily on services provided by the host U.S. institutions and their own networks during their semester abroad, they often miss opportunities to volunteer or immerse themselves in unique U.S. civic-action experiences; therefore, it is critical to encourage and provide such opportunities such as volunteering in activities that expose them to the diversity of the United States.

B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES

A successful project will result in TLU students that:

1. Safely and successfully complete their study abroad semester in the United States;

2. Advance their knowledge, understanding, and experience of civic leadership and community action in the United States; and
3. Gain experiences that prepare them to become action-oriented citizens in their home countries.

C. PROJECT DESIGN

NEA/AC seeks to support projects that will provide TL Study Abroad Oversight, Monitoring, and Support and expand student knowledge, understanding, and experience of civic leadership and community action in the United States.

Funds are available to support projects with potential to promote this objective through activities that provide oversight, monitoring, and support for TL students studying abroad in the United States. The first cohort of students for this project will study abroad beginning in Fall 2023.

Currently, summer study abroad is not permitted due to the short summer time-frame for adjustment and classes and the decreased presence of American faculty/students on campus during summer sessions. Additionally, TLU students are not permitted to undertake an internship during their semester in the United States in order to encourage a focus on academics and civic engagement activities.

Project activities should include:

- a. Liaising with TLU program implementers.
 - Coordinate with MENA-based university implementers on pre-departure orientation logistics and communications with students;
 - Coordinate student roundtrip travel from students' home country/or MENA-based university host country to the United States;
 - Issue DS-2019s prior to student travel for visa applications;
 - Work with MENA-based universities on logistics, administrative, and other requirements for study abroad students, such as clarifying insurance requirements of each university as needed;
 - Work with MENA-based universities to ensure Health Clearance Process is implemented;
 - Work with MENA-based universities to ensure U.S.-based program logistics are completed prior to arrival, including, but not limited to FERPA waiver, photo release, housing and meal plan; and
 - Work with MENA-based universities to ensure students are registering for the appropriate number and type of courses while studying in the United States to have on-time graduation; and provide students' information on U.S. institutions, including available community or student resources.
- b. Providing oversight, monitoring, and support to onboarding students to study in the United States:
 - Monitor and evaluate host campus performance and ensure that host-campus coordinators pro-actively support the students at a consistently high level across all campuses;
 - Establish lines of communication with students before arrival;

- Ensure students receive orientation documents and U.S. host university specific information upon arrival in the United States;
 - Verify pre-arrival orientation information for travelers to the United States includes information detailed in 22 CFR 62.10(b) (1-9), including: 1. The purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program; 2. Home-country physical presence requirement; and, 3. Arrival notification requirements (*e.g.*, procedures that exchange visitors, spouses and dependents are to follow upon entry into the United States in reporting their arrival to the sponsor and reporting to the location of their program);
 - Serve as Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO), coordinating with U.S. university institutions, verifying and/or entering complete and correct DS-2019 information and providing final copies to U.S. traveling program participants;
 - Verify arrival orientation information for travelers to the United States includes information detailed in 22 CFR 62.10(b) (1-9), including: 1. Local community resources (*e.g.*, public transportation, medical centers, schools, libraries, recreation centers, and banks); 2. Name and address of the sponsor and the name, email address, and telephone number of the ARO; 3. The Office of Designation's address, telephone number, facsimile number, website and email address, and a copy of the Exchange Visitor Program brochure or other Department of State materials as appropriate or required (this information is available on the Department's website at: <http://j1visa.state.gov/>); 4. Wilberforce Pamphlet on the Rights and Protections for Temporary Workers; and, 5. The requirement that an exchange visitor must report to the sponsor designee within ten calendar days any changes in his or her telephone number, email address, actual and current U.S. address and site of activity;
 - Monitoring as ARO, coordinating with U.S. university institutions to ensure J-1 exchange visitors in all categories report to the sponsor within ten calendar days any change in their telephone number, email address, actual and current U.S. address, and site of activity and appropriately update data in the SEVIS online system;
 - Providing oversight, immediately notifying NEA/AC of any students that do not comply with terms and conditions required of J-1 visa exchange visitors;
 - Field student inquiries and concerns (*e.g.*, availability of halal food options, navigating the U.S. healthcare system, *etc.*);
 - Be responsive and provide emergency student support (*e.g.*, medical emergencies, COVID-19 pandemic, *etc.*);
 - Assist students with legal, medical, and other issues that arise in the United States in consultation with NEA/AC, such as assisting students in navigating the justice system for submitting any necessary police reports and accompanying students when needed/feasible; and,
 - Process tax forms for international participants with assistance from qualified tax professionals.
- c. Liaising with U.S. host university program coordinators:
- Establish line of communication with U.S. campus coordinators prior to student arrival;
 - Communicate regularly with campus coordinators to address any issues or

concerns and receive student updates (must define “regular” in proposal in terms of frequency and proposed timing);

- Coordinate with U.S. campus coordinators to submit unofficial end-of-semester transcripts to be shared with NEA/AC; and
- Develop an online survey for all U.S. campus coordinators to obtain feedback.

d. Fostering students’ civic engagement:

- Research, propose, and facilitate volunteer opportunities for students to enhance their civic and leadership skills;
- Coordinate with U.S. host universities to ensure students participate in an Alternative Break trip. If this is not offered, facilitate civic-oriented enrichment opportunities for students in atypical areas of the United States (*e.g.*, NOT typical touristic destinations that students can visit on their own such as New York City or Washington, DC: instead plan visit to penitentiary to discuss rule of law/corrections systems, volunteer opportunity at women’s or homeless support shelter, visit to Montgomery, Alabama to discuss civil rights, *etc.*); and
- Ensure sharing of students’ civic engagement blogs or reports to their MENA-based universities and the MEPI website.

e. Monitoring students’ progress during their study abroad experience:

- Visit and/or conduct virtual outreach to students studying in the United States on a regular basis and provide reporting to NEA/AC and MENA-based university implementers (must define “regular” in proposal in terms of frequency and proposed timing);
- Establish disciplinary action system to inform students of any program violations;
- Obtain mid-term grades for all TL students and, if needed, advise the students on ways to improve performance and make progress, and make recommendations to NEA/AC and the MENA-based universities on whether any study abroad students should be sent home early because they are unable to maintain good academic progress;
- Establish a system to notify NEA/AC of any academic concerns for input;
- Develop crisis response processes in line with J1 guidance and TL program guidelines to address topics including but not limited to: arrest or impending arrest, multiple injuries which require hospitalization, death, disasters, threats to public welfare, bomb threats, protests/riots, hostage situations, individual violence, violent crimes, community health issues, infectious disease outbreaks, terrorist threats or possibility of war in the proximity of the study abroad site, Title IX cases, cases of absconding, *etc.*; and a monitoring and evaluation framework as part of the proposal.

f. Analyzing, assessing, and making recommendations for improvements to the study abroad component of the TL program:

- Work with U.S. universities to assess U.S. benefit structure and prepare recommendations for NEA/AC and MENA-based universities (*e.g.*, student living stipend/allowance levels, meal plan options, *etc.*);
- Obtain information on U.S. university resources available to students, such as health and wellness centers, career counseling, networking

opportunities/engagements, and support groups most useful to TL students; assess resources and engage U.S. universities where possible to improve resources available to TL students;

- Analyze selected U.S. universities at mid-program stage to make recommendations on universities that are best suited to receiving and supporting TL students in the future; and
- Analyze whether the number of U.S. universities should be reduced to improve quality and impact for the TL program. In recent years, students have studied abroad at public and private universities in states such as Arizona, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., sometimes in cohort groups and sometimes individually.
- Develop an online survey for all TL students to obtain feedback on the TL program overall, while also reviewing options to improve the study abroad component of the program. Applicants should propose a monitoring and evaluation framework as part of the proposal.

g. Recruitment and Selection of U.S.-based Host Institutions:

- Coordinate with NEA/AC and MENA-based universities to support the partner selection process in identifying and recommending U.S. institutions based on geographic diversity; budget; the strength and relevance of their academic programs in the desired study area(s); ability to effectively coordinate program activities; quality of the on-campus room and board arrangements, including the possibility for shared housing with U.S. students; range and diversity of campus and community resources for service learning and cultural activities; skills training options, and other support for TL students.

h. Orientation and Closing Conference:

- Organize an orientation to provide essential pre-programming information for students to reflect, assess existing knowledge, connect with emotional states and potential anxieties, allay concerns, and establish goals. Applicants should consider whether an in-person orientation at a central location is feasible and useful or if a virtual orientation program would be better to advance the TL program.
- Organize an in-person D.C.-based closing conference in coordination with NEA/AC. The closing conference will address the psychological aspects and challenges of returning home, discuss strategies for seeking employment, and will encourage students to share their U.S. experiences with friends and colleagues. During these sessions, students will also discuss the longer-scale implications of their study abroad experience. In addition, the implementor should facilitate opportunities for engagement with congressional staff to highlight the impact of the program and the study abroad component.

J. Provide financial support:

- Booking of round-trip tickets;
- Monthly allowance (incidentals), \$10 per day;

- One-time settling in allowance (\$200);
- Book allowance;
- Per Diem for days when university dorms/dining halls are closed and in person orientation and closing conference, as applicable;
- Baggage allowance;
- In-transit travel allowance (return only) (\$75);
- Transportation to airport; and,
- Booking of round-trip transportation to Washington, D.C. for the Closing Conference, as well as a hotel and per diem;

Stocktaking and Management Meetings

Annual Management Meeting: NEA/AC plans to host a DC-based annual management meeting with TL implementing institutions, as well as implementing organizations for study abroad, and recruitment. Applicants should budget for five participants to attend this event for three days.

The following activities and costs are **NOT ALLOWED** under this announcement:

- Exchange activities with other countries or territories;
- Social welfare projects;
- Paying to complete activities begun with other funds;
- Activities that appear partisan or that support individual or party electoral campaigns;
- Academic or analytical research (if not necessary as part of a larger project);
- One-time events, such as stand-alone conferences and one-off round tables;
- Medical and psychological research and clinical studies;
- Projects of a commercial or profit-making nature;
- Cultural presentations, cultural research, cultural clubs, or festivals, etc.; and
- Entertainment costs (e.g., receptions, social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, guided tours).

NOTE: Applications that include any of these activities or costs above may be eliminated at the Technical Eligibility Review stage and will not advance to the Merit Review Panel.

D. GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION INTEGRATION

NEA/AC requires that all activities fully address intersectional gender and inclusion considerations, ensuring that individuals of all genders and diverse backgrounds benefit from support where applicable, and that gender and inclusion awareness is a built-in component of project activities. This should be documented through gender and social inclusion analysis in the project narrative that identifies any relevant gender and inclusion gaps and ways the proposed activities will address those gaps. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing relevant gender and inclusion gaps will enhance the project's goals and objectives. Applicants who are unfamiliar with integrating gender and inclusivity in foreign assistance programing should view the training video located here:

https://encompassworld.com/elearningfiles/DOS/DOS_Gender_Integration_E-Course/story_html5.html

E. DEFINITIONS

Equity:

In accordance with Executive Order 13985, the term “equity” means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Underserved communities:

In accordance with Executive Order 13985, the term “underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “equity.”

II.MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

Applicants shall provide a logic model or a theory of change statement to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives, with particular attention to ensure your approach will reach individuals of diverse backgrounds relevant to your specific context. The logic model or theory of change statements can be generated using the template in Appendix II. Please see Section VI below for more information.

Successful applicants will work with the NEA/AC program and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) teams to create a Results Monitoring Plan (RMP) based on the proposed logic model/theory of change to measure qualitative and quantitative indicators as part of the award negotiations process. The successful applicants will be responsible for collecting data against these indicators -- which will be monitored throughout the period of performance of the award to gauge necessary modifications to the project’s design -- and assess the results of the project’s success in meeting expected outcomes.

All projects funded as a result of this NOFO will be required to complete a final evaluation of the project at the end of the period of performance with support from the NEA/AC MEL team. Selected applicants are required to have project information available for up to three years after the project closeout for the NEA/AC team to evaluate long-term outcomes.

III.AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement
Estimated Number of Awards:	1
Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$1,250,000
Estimated Award Ceiling:	\$6,250,000
Estimated Award Floor:	\$1,000,000
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	Encouraged; NOT Required
Estimated Length of Project Period:	12 Months

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately \$1,250,000 in Economic Support Funds for approximately one award will be awarded through this announcement. If selected to receive an award, an applicant will be awarded funds for up to **12 Months**, depending on the activities and countries proposed. The estimated start date for this project is September 1, 2023.

NEA/AC reserves the right to award more or less than the estimated program funding and reserves the right to award funding under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

This request for full applications **does not** constitute an award or commitment on the part of the U.S. government to make any awards, **nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.**

Incremental Funding

NEA/AC intends to provide up to \$6,250,000 in total funding over a five-year period. Funding for this award will be provided on an incremental basis subject to the availability of funds and successful performance. NEA/AC reserves the right to change the funding amounts, period of performance, and terms of the award as a result of U.S. Government requirements, recipient performance, project results, and the availability of funds. The recipient will be notified in writing should such changes occur.

The resulting award will use an incremental funding mechanism and will only fund the first increment in the initial award. Up to \$1,250,000 is available for the first increment of funding (ceiling amount). It is estimated that the first increment will provide funding for the initial 12 months of the award (anticipated: September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2024), and additional increments will provide funding for up to an additional 48 months (in one year increments) (anticipated: September 1, 2024 to September 1, 2028) for a five-year period of performance. Additional incremental of funding is contingent upon the availability of funds and will be awarded at NEA/AC's discretion.

Special instructions regarding incremental funding:

Please provide a complete proposal that includes total project funding. The proposal narrative and budget should clearly specify the activities, budget breakdown, and timeframes for each funding increment. Additionally, the applicant should ensure that the project is severable after the completion of the first increment. The proposal should clearly demonstrate the value delivered at the end of the first increment which could stand on its own merits should funding for a second (and/or additional) increment(s) be unavailable.

IV.SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

NEA/AC shall be involved in the program and management performance of these cooperative agreements through consultation and technical collaboration on specified program activities.

NEA/AC Responsibilities

Examples of NEA/AC responsibilities for a cooperative agreement may include:

- Collaboration in establishing annual program objectives and approval of an annual work plan;
- Approval of key personnel and any subsequent changes in the positions during the life of the award;
- Collaboration in development of program policies and procedures;
- Collaboration in designing surveys, research methods, or other tools;
- Collaboration in design of enhanced civic action opportunities for students;
- Collaboration in determining corrective actions, when necessary;
- Collaboration in addressing gender and incorporating gender in activities;
- Collaboration in the creation of any training materials;
- Collaboration in establishing new partnerships with U.S. host institutions;
- Collaboration in coordination with TL university partners.

V.ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

All applicants will be screened by NEA/AC to determine whether they meet all of the program eligibility requirements detailed below.

NOTE: Applications that do not demonstrate that they meet all of the eligibility requirements in Section A and Section B will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage and may be deemed ineligible for funding under this announcement. Nothing can be added to an application once the competition deadline has passed.

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include—

- U.S. or foreign
 - o Non-profit organizations;
 - o For-profit organizations;
 - o Public international organizations; and

- o Small businesses with functional and regional experience in MENA.

A.1. Prime Applicant

To be considered for funding under this opportunity, applicants SHALL:

- Have demonstrable previous experience working in managing study abroad programs.
- Meet ALL of the registration requirements listed in *Section B* below.

B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

To apply for NEA/AC (Federal) funding, organizations, whether based in or outside the U.S., must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and an active account with the System for Award Management (SAM). Applicants who do not meet all registration requirements are NOT eligible for funding under the opportunity.

UEI Number

All applicants must have a Unique Entity Identification (UEI) number.

On and after April 4, 2022, entities can register in SAM.gov and will be assigned their Unique Entity ID (SAM) within SAM.gov. Entities will no longer obtain or use a UEI (DUNS) for entity registration or reporting.

System for Award Management (SAM)

SAM is a U.S. government wide registry of vendors doing business with the Federal government and requires annual renewal. The system centralizes information about grant applicants/recipients and provides a central location for grant applicants/recipients to change organizational information.

Further, each applicant must maintain an active account, with current information, while its application is under consideration for funding. To keep an active SAM.gov account, an applicant must renew it at least once each year. **If an organization's account expires, the organization cannot submit a grant application until it is renewed.**

To create a new SAM account, go to <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>.

Organizations must have a UEI number and a CAGE number (US Domestic Organizations) or a NCAGE number (Foreign Organizations), to create an account. The CAGE code will be issued by SAM.gov. Overseas entities must request a NCAGE code at <https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/Codification/CageTool/request-new-cage>.

For help with SAM.gov, please visit their support page at <https://www.fsd.gov> or contact them at: 866-606-8220 (U.S.) or +1-334-206-7828 (international).

Note: Obtaining an active SAM.gov registration may take **12 - 15 business days** to complete the process of creating an account in the system.

C. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Cost-Sharing or Matching

There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, NEA/AC encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

Cost-sharing or matching is not an evaluation criteria of this NOFO.

VI.APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

All applications must include the application components detailed below. **All application documents must be submitted in English.** Applicants may submit only one (1) application. Please refer to Section B below for additional submissions guidance and requirements.

NOTE: Applications that do not include all the required documentation described in Section 1 below will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage. Further, applications that exceed the allowable page limits will not be reviewed by the review panel. **Applicants may not add any materials to an application once it has been submitted and the competition deadline has passed.**

A.1. Required Documents

Federal Assistance Application Forms (SF-424 and SF424a)

Applicants must complete each of these forms online to be considered for funding.

Guidance on how to complete the SF-424 and SF424a is provided in Appendix 3. NOTE: In addition to following all guidance outlined below regarding application materials, applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Application Evaluation Criteria section of this NOFO closely as they prepare their proposal. The Evaluation Criteria section is the rubric by which each application will be scored.

Project Narrative

The Project Narrative describes the efforts the applicant will undertake to address the priorities and goals of this announcement. It may **be no longer than 15 pages**. More details on preparing the Project Narrative are provided in Appendix 3. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Appendix 3 before preparing their Narrative.**

Budget & Budget Narrative Submission

Applicants must provide the following three elements as part of their budget submission:

- Summary Budget
- Detailed Line Item Budget
- Budget Narrative

There is no page limit for this section of an application. A sample fillable template can be found in Appendix 1. This template includes three tabs: The first tab includes written guidance on preparing the **Budget Narrative**. Applicants are strongly encouraged to create their Budget Narrative in Word and submit as either a Word Doc or PDF file. Please note that the Budget Narrative should include designations of who is considered Key Personnel for this project. As defined in the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions (for assistance awards, Key Personnel means, "...key professional and supervisory personnel; i.e., the members of the professional staff in a program supervisory position engaged for or assigned to duties under the award." The second tab has the template for the **Summary Budget**. This tab will auto-fill as you complete the Detailed Line Item Budget, which can be found on the third tab. The third tab is where you can fill in the template for the **Detailed Line Item Budget** as stated above. **NOTE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same format as provided in the template, and to submit summary and detailed line item budgets in Excel form, and the Budget Narrative as either a PDF or Word file.** If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. The template, which includes more detailed instructions, can be found in Appendix 1. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Appendix 1 before preparing their Budget and Budget Narrative.**

Logic Model or Theory of Change

Applicants shall provide a logic model or theory of change statement to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives, with particular attention to how your approach will reach individuals of diverse backgrounds relevant to your specific context. A Theory of Change statement describes how and why a program is expected to achieve its stated outcomes using if-then-because language. If submitted, findings from the Gender & Inclusion Analysis (see A.2. Optional Documents) should be clearly addressed in the program design and Logic Model. The logic model or theory of change statements can be generated using the template in **Appendix 2**. **NOTE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same format as found in the sample.** If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. This section **may be no longer than 3 pages**.

Project Timeline

Applicants must provide an overall breakdown of the order and timeframe in which all project activities will take place. This item should provide a macro snapshot of what will take place from beginning to end of the project. Applicants must ensure that the timeline of activities/events

corresponds with details provided in the Project Narrative and Logic Model or Theory of Change. This section **may not exceed 2 pages**.

Job Descriptions / Biographical Info for Key Personnel Positions

For each position designated as key personnel for this project, applicants must provide the following:

1. If the position is already filled: Provide brief biographical information summarizing the person's qualifications, as well as a brief description of the roles or responsibilities pertaining to this project.

OR

If the person to fill a key position has not yet been hired: Provide a brief summary of the job description, which should include a description of the roles and responsibilities pertaining to this project, as well as a description of qualifications of eligible candidates.

NEA/AC intends to designate the following positions as key personnel:

- Program Manager
- Study Abroad Advisor(s)

NOTE: If an applicant is proposing sub grant partner(s) as part of their project design, **Key Personnel/Positions of the sub grantee must also be included**. This section of the application **may not exceed 5 pages**.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement

Applicants proposing indirect costs in the Budget greater than a 10% de minimis rate must provide a copy of their Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). This item will not be counted toward any page limits.

A.2. Optional Documents

Applicants may submit additional documents for consideration with their application. These documents are not required and there is a 10 page limit for this section of the application. Below are examples of some additional documents an applicant may wish to submit.

1. **Letters of Agreement or Letters of Intent:** Applicants proposing partner organizations and/or government bodies should include Letters of Intent or Letters of Agreement from their proposed partners.
2. **Organizational Chart:** The organizational chart outlines the clear lines of responsibility and authority in the applicant organization to include budgeted level of effort listed by each person.
3. **Sustainability Plan:** The sustainability plan outlines how the proposed project will be sustained beyond the initial award period. More information on preparing the Sustainability Plan is provided in **Appendix 3**. Sustainability Plans may not exceed **2 pages**.
4. **Security, Risk Mitigation, & Contingency Planning Summary:** This item should provide detail regarding the applicant's intended due diligence to assess and mitigate

risks, and put in place adequate security measures to ensure the safety and well-being of project staff, participants, and partners, if applicable. This should include specific actions by the applicant to ensure risks are adequately and routinely assessed, and that security measures are commensurate with operational concerns specific to the locale. The applicant should also include a contingency plan that highlights potential challenges and limitations to project implementation in the operating environment and propose contingency plans should program activities be impacted. Please note that this section should not be limited to physical security and risk but should cover any applicable factors relevant to the given operating environment. This section **may not exceed 5 pages**.

5. **Logic Model and Theory of Change:** A logic model or theory of change demonstrates how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives. The logic model or theory of change statements can be generated using the template in **Appendix 2**. This section **may not exceed 3 pages**.
6. **Gender and Inclusion Analysis** (not to exceed three (3) pages, preferably as a Word Document) that provides a concise analysis of relevant gender norms, equity and equality for underserved communities and marginalized populations, power relations, and conflict dynamics in target countries. Potential domains of analysis include institutional practices and barriers, cultural norms, gender roles, access to and control over assets and resources, and patterns of decision-making. Applicants should briefly explain how they have integrated findings from their analysis into project design and/or other proposal documents, including a plan for regularly reviewing and updating the gender and inclusion analysis with local partners/beneficiaries, and making any necessary adjustments to program implementation. A set of guiding questions can be found in Section 1L of the Proposal Submission Instructions for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of the U.S. Department of State.

NOTE: Applicants must adhere to all maximum allowed page counts. Applications that exceed any of the allowable page limits will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage.

B. APPLICATION FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

The required font is 12-point, Times New Roman. All application documents must be single spaced, with all margins (left, right, top, and bottom) of at least one inch each. Also, applicants should ensure all pages in the application package are numbered consecutively and meet the page limit requirements outlined in Section VI above. **The Standard Forms 424 (SF-424, SF-424a, and SF-424b) are excluded from the page numbering.**

It is strongly recommended that applicants submit grant applications using Microsoft Office. If applicants do not have access to Microsoft Office products, Adobe PDF files may be submitted.

C. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Applicants must submit their application electronically using SAMS Domestic. This system requires that the applying organization have an account with the system and requires a UEI number and SAM.gov account as detailed in Section V. **It is the responsibility of the applicant**

to ensure they have an active account and will be able to submit its application. NEA/AC is not in a position to grant exceptions to these requirements.

SAMS Domestic

SAMS Domestic is a comprehensive grants management system that allows applicants to apply for, manage, and report on the use of U.S. government funds for multiple programs, accessed online at mygrants.service-now.com.

To create an account, go to <https://afsitsm.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>, and click the “create an account” hyperlink, located above the user name prompt. Users will be directed to a page entitled “User Registration Request;” complete the online form and click the “Submit” button. Users will receive an activation email entitled “Verify Your Grants Account Registration;” click the activation link within the email to receive a username and password.

SAMS Domestic has Quick Tours available to educate users about the system. These documents can be found on the Support tab upon logging into the system.

D. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Applications must be time stamped before 17:00:00 eastern time (ET) on February 23, 2023 There will be no grace period, and any application not received by the application deadline will be deemed ineligible and will not advance to be reviewed. **Each applicant is encouraged to submit an application far enough in advance of the deadline so that the applicant can alert NEA/AC (nea-grants@state.gov) of any technical difficulties and allow sufficient time to resolve difficulties before the deadline.** Although NEA/AC will work with applicants to resolve technical issues, it is not in a position to grant exceptions to the submission requirements outlined in this announcement.

VII.FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A. AWARDS TO COMMERCIAL FIRMS OR FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

The Department of State prohibits profit under its assistance awards to commercial organizations. No funds will be paid as profit to any recipient that is a commercial organization. Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR Part 31. Program income earned by the recipient may be:

- added to the total of the amount of this award, including the required cost sharing or matching, and use it to further eligible project objectives;
- used to meet the Recipient’s cost sharing or matching requirement;
- OR deducted from the total project or program allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the federal share of costs is based.

B. AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

Domestic and foreign organizations that expend \$750,000 or more in a fiscal year in federal assistance must perform an independent, recipient-contracted Single Audit or Program Specific Audit. (***Program-specific Audit*** means an audit of one Federal award program. ***Single Audit*** means an audit which includes both the entity's financial statements and the Federal Awards to be conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). The audits must be independently and professionally executed in accordance with GAGAS either prescribed by a government's Supreme Audit Institution with auditing standards approved by the Comptroller General of the United States, or the host country's laws or adopted by the host country's public accountants or associations of public accountants, together with generally accepted international auditing standards. However, foreign entity audits consistent with International Standards for Auditing or other auditing standards are acceptable with the Grants Officer's approval. More information can be found at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/693136.pdf>

For sub-non-Federal entities expending \$750,000 or more in Department of State award funding during their fiscal year, Department of State standard audit provisions require that Prime non-Federal entities certify that audits of sub-non-Federal entities are performed annually and according to the standards described above. The cost of audits required under this policy may be charged either as an allowable direct cost to the award OR included in the organizations established indirect costs in the award's detailed budget.

C. COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE FEDERAL FUNDING REGULATIONS AND DOS TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Payment of funds awarded under this Notice of Funding Opportunity will not be disbursed until the DOS has been assured that the Recipient's financial management system will provide effective control over and accountability for all Federal funds in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 600 as applicable. Awards issued under this NOFO are subject to the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions (<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/U.S.-Department-of-State-Standard-Terms-and-Conditions-10-01-2019508.pdf>) and 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 600 as applicable.

VIII.APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Achievable Objectives (30 points)

Each of the project objectives listed above (in Section I) are clearly addressed.

- Impact and Effectiveness: The applicant describes the project's potential contribution to solving the problem addressed in the problem statement and achieving results.
- Timeframe: The applicant describes realistic results to be accomplished within the timeframe of the proposed award.
- Milestones: The applicant provides realistic milestones to indicate progress toward goals and objectives as described in the program announcement.

- MEL: The applicant explains how monitoring and evaluation activities will be carried out throughout the award's period of performance and who will be responsible for them. Proposes a monitoring and evaluation framework and monitoring frequency, timing, and methods for all monitoring and evaluation activities including monitoring of students.
- Ideally, the applicant will have an embedded team member or dedicated point of contact specialized in MEL that can offer regular program updates to NEA/AC and assist with adjusting the project in response.

Project Design (40 points)

The applicant clearly describes how each proposed project activity will address each of the objectives outlined in the requested priority area above (Section I).

- Responsiveness to NOFO: Explain how the proposed activities respond to the objectives listed in the NOFO.
- Rationale: To justify how the proposed activities will achieve the above objectives in this context.
- Project Management: Clear description of how the project will be managed in terms of initiation, planning, implementation and closing.
- Partnerships and Buy-ins: The applicant addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders and identifies any local partners.
- Feasibility: The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, and are also practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation.

Organizational Capacity (20 points)

- The applicant demonstrates experience (e.g., has previously worked and/or has established contacts/partners) in the proposed country/territory/region.
- The applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful programs in the content area proposed (e.g., study abroad oversight, monitoring, support).
- The applicant demonstrates experience working equitably with individuals of all genders and diverse backgrounds.
- The applicant demonstrates capacity for responsible fiscal management of donor funding (e.g., successful management of a previous sub-award or grant).
- The applicant demonstrates the ability to meet monitoring and evaluation requirements.
- The applicant has adequate staffing and demonstrates the capacity to manage the proposed project.

Staff and Position Specifications (10 points)

- Pre-identified key staff members, including volunteers, demonstrate experience working in the country/territory/region proposed and with participants from that area (e.g., language skills, cultural understanding).
- A description of the roles of each person or position on the project, whether staff, partner, consultant, or volunteer demonstrates that the project will be adequately but efficiently staffed, avoiding redundancy or duplication of effort.
- A job description, including hiring criteria, is provided for each open key position.
- Pre-identified key staff members, including volunteers, demonstrate experience and knowledge in the proposed content area.
- Applicant and/or partner staff have relevant language competencies.

- The applicant convincingly details how it will incorporate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) principles in its approach to staffing.

Budget & Budget Narrative (Acceptable or Not Acceptable)

- The costs proposed are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results, which are clearly explained in the budget narrative.
- The budget provides details of calculations, including estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail sufficient for the calculation to be duplicated.
- The preponderance of the budget is spent on supporting the project participants/activities in country.
- The budget includes costs dedicated to management, monitoring, and evaluation, and any costs needed for further gender analysis and for addressing gender gaps.
- Adequate travel costs are proposed.
- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.
- The budget accounts for monitoring and evaluation costs.

B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

NEA/AC is committed to ensuring a competitive and standardized process for awarding funding. Applications will be screened initially in a Technical Eligibility Review stage to determine whether applicants meet the eligibility requirements outlined in Section V and have submitted all required documents outlined in Section VI. Applications that do not meet these requirements will not advance beyond the Technical Eligibility Review stage and will be deemed ineligible for funding under this NOFO.

NEA/AC reserves the right to have all applications deemed to be technically eligible undergo a Subject Matter Expert (SME) review prior to the Merit Review Panel. Applications that do not pass SME review will not proceed to the Merit Review Panel.

All applications that proceed to the Merit Review Panel will be evaluated by U.S. government and non-governmental subject matter and/or country-specific experts and will be rated on a 100-point scale. Point values for individual elements of the application are presented in Section VIII. Panel Reviewers' ratings, and any resulting recommendations, are advisory.

Final award decisions will be influenced by whether the application meets NEA/AC's programmatic goals and objectives, how it supports the Department's overarching foreign policy priorities, and the geographic distribution of the top-ranking applications.

IX. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. AWARD NOTICES

Applicants who do not advance beyond the Technical Eligibility Review stage will be notified 30 business days after the closing of the announcement. The authorized representative and program point of contact listed on the SF-424 will receive the notification via

email. If an applicant does not receive such a notification, their submission was put forward for review.

NEA/AC expects to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by April 14, 2023 Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application. NEA/AC reserves the right to award funding to applicants under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

B. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting is critical to effective program management and oversight. Reports are required as a means of evaluating the recipient's progress and utilization of resources. They are divided between a performance progress report and a financial status report.

Recipients will, at a minimum, be required to submit Quarterly Performance Reports (QPR) and a Quarterly Financial Report (QFR). The QPRs will compare actual to planned performance and indicates the progress made in accomplishing each assistance award tasks/goals noted in the grant agreement and will contain analysis and summary of findings, both quantitative and qualitative, for key indicators. The QFRs provide a means of monitoring expenditures and comparing costs incurred with progress.

Recipients must report ***immediately*** when a program faces unplanned delays in implementation, fails to meet program targets or milestones, or costs increase. Any changes or revisions to the approved budget require prior approval from the NEA/AC Grants Officer.

Recipients are required to report program and beneficiary achievements on a quarterly basis (or provide written confirmation that there is no related news for the given quarter) beginning with second quarter's program report.

Other required reporting will include:

- 1) **Annual Branding and Marking Plan** – to be submitted to NEA/AC for approval within 30 days of award, using an agreed upon template
- 2) **Detailed Annual Work Plan** - to be submitted to NEA/AC for approval within 30 days of award, using an agreed upon format
- 3) **Emergency / Incident Reporting** – the recipient must promptly (within 48 hours) report to NEA/AC student emergencies that come to its attention, including but not limited to student travel difficulties, legal issues, and health or safety issues. An initial report may be by phone if email is not possible, to be followed **up in writing within a reasonable number of business days.**

- 4) **Articles /social media posts**– the recipient will produce at least one social media posts per week during the semester to highlight student academic and civic experiences in the U.S.
- 5) **Annual Student Safety, Security, and Wellness Plan / Report** - Within 30 days of award and at least annually thereafter, the Recipient must submit a plan for student safety, security, and wellness in a format agreed with NEA/AC. The plan must outline applicable policies and procedures and also include statistical and anecdotal reporting on any related issues.
- 6) **Program Manual** – within 60 days of award, the recipient will submit a program manual to NEA/AC for approval. The Manual will be updated on an ongoing basis and at least annually, with updates also submitted for approval.

C. TRAVEL NOTIFICATIONS

Successful applicants will be required to provide prior notification of all international travel as a requirement of their agreement. This includes travel which is already included in the approved budget and Scope of Work. The purpose of this notification is to enable NEA/AC to inform the relevant U.S. Embassy or post of the recipient's intent to travel. The recipient must notify the Grants Officer at least three (3) business days prior to any travel. The Grants Officer reserves the right to advise against specific travel arrangements for security-related reasons.

D. APPLICANT VETTING AS A CONDITION OF AWARD

Applicants will not be required to conduct vetting. All program participants are pre-selected and vetted.

E. SPECIAL PROVISION FOR PERFORMANCE IN A DESIGNATED COMBAT AREA (SPOT) REQUIREMENTS

N/A

F. BRANDING AND MARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTEES

Grantees awarded under this announcement will be required to make all materials produced under the award with the standard U.S. flag in a size and prominence equal to (or greater than) any other logo or identity. Materials are defined as but not limited to: training materials, materials for recipients, or materials to communicate or promote with foreign audiences a program, event, project, or some other activity under this award, including but not limited to invitations to events, press materials, event backdrops, podium signs, etc. In addition, sub-recipients or sub-awardees are subject to the marking requirements and the grantee shall include a provision in the sub-recipient or sub-awardee's agreement indicating that the standard, rectangular U.S. flag is a requirement. Exceptions to this requirement can be discussed with NEA/AC when negotiating an award.

Grantees awarded under this announcement will be required to follow MEPI social media guidelines for any and all online presences related to the project. Grantees will be expected to tag @USMEPI in all social media posts and utilize the official hashtag #MEPI for any social

media posts in Arabic or English. Grantees will be expected to highlight MEPI online and share as many MEPI stories as possible, including demonstrating how each MEPI programs strive to achieve its assistance objectives of participatory governance and economic reform.

G. UEI NUMBER REQUIREMENT FOR SUB AWARDEES

All sub-awardees are required to have a UEI number. For information on obtaining a UEI number, please see Section V. B. **Proposed sub-awardees are not required to have a UEI number prior to the submission of an application but must have one prior to a sub-award being issued.**

H. SUB AWARDEE REPORTING REQUIREMENT

Grantees awarded under this announcement will be required to report all sub-awardees receiving funds of \$25,000 or more to <http://www.fsrs.gov>. More information about this requirement can be found at this site.

X.AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions regarding this funding opportunity including: completing an application, financial and grants management issues, or technical matters, contact:

Grants Officer

Karen McKenna

nea-grants@state.gov

All questions and a notification of Intent to Apply must be submitted in writing to nea-grants@state.gov by **January 13, 2023** at 17:00:00 eastern time (ET). NEA/AC will create a document of the submitted questions along with the answers and post it on SAMS Domestic. Questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

The intent to apply is a notification to the Bureau of Near East Affairs Office of Assistance Coordination via email expressing the intent to submit a proposal under this announcement. The notification does not require any specific format or template.

The intent to apply is optional and will not be binding.

For questions regarding creating an account or using SAMS Domestic to submit an application, contact the ILMS Help Desk. The Help Desk is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, excluding Federal holidays. The ILMS Help Desk utilizes a user-facing ticketing interface that allows users to submit and monitor their SAMS Domestic tickets. The ILMS Self Service Portal can be accessed by going to <https://afsism.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>.

ILMS Help Desk

(888) 313-ILMS (4567)

<https://afsism.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>

XI.DISCLAIMER

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the bureau that contradicts public language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements listed in this NOFO.