U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. EMBASSY COTONOU PUBLIC DIPLOMACY SECTION
Notice of Funding Opportunity

Funding Opportunity Title:	U.S. Embassy Cotonou PDS Request for Statements of Interest: Notice of Funding Opportunity
Funding Opportunity Number:	PAS-SGP-FY24
Deadline for Applications:	May 30, 2024 (11:59 p.m.)
Assistance Listing Number:	19.040 – Public Diplomacy Programs 19.022 – ECA Programs
Total Amount Available:	Approximately $145,000 (Subject to Availability of Funds)
Maximum for Each Award:	Varies (See Priority Program Objectives)

The U.S. Embassy is unable to provide individual feedback on non-selected Statements of Interest. A public presentation with general feedback will be offered. The date and time will be announced on the Embassy Facebook.

A. PROGRAM DECRIPTION

The U.S. Embassy Cotonou Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) of the U.S. Department of State announces a Request for Statements of Interest (RSOI) from organizations interested in applying for funding for program proposals that **strengthen ties between the peoples of the United States and Benin** through cultural and exchange programming that highlights shared values and promotes bilateral cooperation. PDS invites organizations interested in potential funding to submit SOI applications outlining program concepts that reflect this goal. Please carefully follow all instructions below.

The submission of a SOI is the first step in a two-part process. Applicants must first submit a SOI, which is a concise, one-to-two-page concept note (in English) designed to clearly communicate a program idea and its objectives before the development of a full proposal application. The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants the opportunity to submit program ideas for PDS to evaluate prior to requiring the development of full proposal applications. Upon review of eligible SOIs, PDS will invite selected applicants to expand their ideas into full proposal applications.

Purpose: PDS Cotonou invites SOIs for programs that **strengthen ties between the people of the United States and the people of Benin** through cultural and exchange programming that highlights shared values and promotes bilateral cooperation. **All programs must include an American cultural element, or a connection with American expert/s, organization/s, or institution/s in a specific field that will promote increased understanding of U.S. policy and perspectives**.

Examples of PDS-funded programs include, but are not limited to*:*

- Academic and professional lectures, seminars, and speaker programs;

- Artistic and cultural workshops, joint performances, and exhibitions;
- Cultural heritage conservation and preservation programs;
- Professional and academic exchanges and programs;
- Experiential learning activities (e.g. Model UN, Model Government).

Priority Program Objectives and Audiences

Project proposals submitted through this Annual Program Statement (APS) should address one of the following Priority Program Objectives:

Vulnerable Groups Empowerment: Activities that address poverty and vulnerability in the communities and contribute to build resilience and social cohesion or/and promote the rights of members of marginalized groups including women and girls, religious and ethnic minority groups and other community at risk (e.g. Capacity building on countering Violent Extremist Organizations VEOs' disinformation and recruitment). Target audiences include: youth and young adults active in their communities, religious leaders, community members in the North. (One to two awards anticipated, maximum $10,000 each).

Investigative Journalism: Activities that link Beninese journalists to American journalists or media institutions, and/or empower community radios with best practices to handle an adversarial debate, and/or develop tools and skills to combat myths and disinformation and to verify information before sharing with the public in order to strengthen free press and journalism as an institution in Benin. Target audience: community radios, mid-career journalists. (One to two awards anticipated, maximum $15,000 each).

U.S.-Benin Partnership: Activities featuring popular American and/or Beninese artists, musicians, cultural figures, and other influencers in order to promote a deeper understanding of the United States' long support for improving trade and prosperity in Benin, as well as habits that lead to healthier and more prosperous lives (e.g. promoting U.S.-Benin trade with linkage to AGOA). Target audiences include: women entrepreneurs who specialize in handicrafts, youth and young adults who use social media or listen to radio as their primary source of information; and/or educated urban adults unaware of U.S. initiatives to support Benin's development. (One to two awards anticipated, maximum $25,000 each).

Skills for Success: Activities to promote STEM, learning American English, especially through soft skills (such as resume writing, digital communications, basic financial literacy, public speaking, entrepreneurial skills) and digital literacy, drawing on American and Beninese examples, in order to encourage successful participation in the global economy. Applicants are strongly encouraged to partner with English Clubs, American Spaces, or U.S. exchange program alumni to conduct these activities. Target audiences include: underemployed and unemployed youth who will soon complete or have completed formal education; female microentrepreneurs; and/or graduate/undergraduate students in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math with a strong interest in improving their English or pursuing graduate study in the United States. (One to three awards anticipated, $15,000 each).

The following types of programs are not eligible for funding:

- Programs relating to partisan political activity;
- For-profit programs
- Charitable or development activities;
- Construction programs;
- Programs that support specific religious activities;
- Fund-raising campaigns;
- Lobbying for specific legislation or programs;
- Scientific research;
- Programs intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the organization; or
- Programs that duplicate existing programs.

Authorizing legislation, type and year of funding:
The Statutory Authority for this program is the Smith-Mundt Act or the Fulbright-Hays Act. The source of funding is FY2024 Public Diplomacy or Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs funds, dependent on the type of program.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: 6 to 12 months
Number of awards anticipated: varies (dependent on amounts)
Award amounts: awards may range from a minimum of $5,000 to a maximum of $25,000
Total available funding: $145,000 (Anticipated and Subject to Availability of Funds)
Type of Funding: Fiscal Year 2024 Public Diplomacy Funding and/or Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Funding
Anticipated program start date: Varies

Funding Instrument Type: Grant, Fixed Amount Award, Individual Award, or Cooperative Agreement. Cooperative agreements and some FAAs are different from grants in that PDS staff are more actively involved in the grant implementation ("Substantial Involvement").

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed in 12 months or less. PDS may 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 funds.

C. ELIGILIBITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

The Public Diplomacy Section encourages applications from U.S. and Beninese:

- Registered not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations with programming experience;
- Individuals;
- Non-profit or governmental educational institutions;
- Governmental institutions.

For-profit or commercial entities are not eligible to apply.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing is not required. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

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. To be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid and active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) www.SAM.gov. ***Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.***

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

The U.S. Embassy Cotonou Public Diplomacy Section will accept proposals through May 30, 2024. A grants committee including U.S. Embassy employees will review eligible applications in June 2024. All application materials must be submitted by email to CotonouPASGrants@state.gov

All Statements of Interest SOI applications should ensure that the following requirements are met:

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.

Content of Application

Please ensure:

- The SOI clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars

- All pages are numbered
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper, and
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

The following document is **required**:

1. Program Statement (not to exceed 2 pages in Microsoft Word) that includes:

- A table listing:
  - Name of the organization;
  - The target country/countries;
  - The total amount of funding requested from PD Cotonou, total amount of cost-share (if any), and total program amount (PD funds + cost-share); and,
  - Program length;
- A synopsis of the program, including a brief statement on how the program will have a demonstrated impact and engage relevant stakeholders, as well as the American element;
- A concise breakdown explicitly identifying the program's objectives and the activities and expected results that contribute to each objective; and,
- A brief description of the applicant(s) that demonstrates the applicant(s) expertise and capacity to implement the program and manage a U.S. government award.

The **deadline** for submission of SOIs is ***May 30, 2024***. An organization may submit **no more than one SOI.**

E. APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA

1. **Quality of Program Idea:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact. The SOI should explain why the proposed program is needed.
2. **Program Planning**: A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the objectives. A proposed timeline for the program activities should include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
3. **Ability to Achieve Objectives/Institutional Capacity**: A demonstration of the organization's or individual's expertise and previous experience in administering programs.
4. **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility:** Clearly stated objectives for recruiting and fully including participants from historically underserved communities in program activities, and/or including perspectives from historically underserved communities in the United States.

A Grants Review Committee will evaluate all eligible applications. SOI applicants will be notified of the decision to present a full submission within 30 days of each submission deadline. Instructions on the requirements of a full application submission will be provided at that time.