Educational and Cultural Affairs

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2024 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders
Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0010284
Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.009
Deadline for Applications: April 30, 2024

Executive Summary:
The Study of the U.S. Branch, Office of Academic Exchange Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State invites proposal submissions for one cooperative agreement to design, implement, and oversee the FY 2024 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders (Mandela Washington Fellowship). Established in 2014, the Mandela Washington Fellowship has built and sustained a committed network of approximately 6,500 young African leaders across critical sectors to cement stronger ties between Sub-Saharan Africa and the United States and to prepare the African participants (Fellows) for leadership roles across the continent. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is the flagship program of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), which aims to strengthen democratic institutions and good governance, spur economic growth and prosperity, and enhance peace and security across Africa and the United States.

The award recipient will be responsible for planning and administering all components and aspects of the Mandela Washington Fellowship including six-week Leadership Institutes at U.S. campuses for approximately 700 Fellows, a Summit for all Fellows, Professional Development Experiences (PDEs) for approximately 100 Fellows, a Reciprocal Exchange component that includes a minimum of 100 U.S. participants, and follow-on alumni activities. Under this award, the first group of Fellows would travel to the United States for the Leadership Institutes in summer 2025. The award recipient should design the Fellow application materials, develop an outreach and recruitment plan, receive and screen applications in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State, and oversee the final Fellow selection and placement process. The recipient will recruit, select, and oversee the U.S. host institutions that will each implement the Leadership Institutes in one of three tracks: Business, Civic Engagement, or Public Management.

The Leadership Institutes should be six-weeks long and should take place at an accredited U.S. college or university. The Institutes should provide groups of approximately 25 young African leaders with intensive practical academic content in one of the three tracks, as well as include

robust leadership development components, networking opportunities, community service activities, site visits, and cultural enrichment.

The Summit should take place at either the beginning or the end of the Institutes for three to four days. The PDEs are professional placements at relevant U.S. businesses, non-governmental organizations, or U.S. government agencies and should take place after the Leadership Institute and Summit. The Reciprocal Exchange component should provide small grants to support a minimum of 100 U.S. citizens to travel to Sub-Saharan Africa to build upon strategic partnerships and professional connections developed during the Mandela Washington Fellowship in the United States.

Applicants should submit a proposal to administer all components including the Leadership Institutes, the Summit, the PDEs, the Reciprocal Exchange component, and follow-on alumni activities. ECA will award one cooperative agreement comprising all of these activities.

Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

It is anticipated that the total amount of funding available for this cooperative agreement will be approximately $17,885,000, pending the availability of FY 2024 funds. Each U.S. university or college selected to host a Leadership Institute should expect costs of approximately $250,000, inclusive of cost share. Of this total amount, the recipient should be prepared to transfer approximately $235,000 to host universities/non-governmental organizations for the administration of each Institute under sub-award agreements. ECA welcomes applications from U.S. public and private non-profit organizations, consortia of organizations, and accredited post-secondary U.S. education institutions meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets, participant numbers, Leadership Institute tracks, the number of Institutes, and/or countries based on program needs and the availability of U.S. government funding (see section C. Eligibility Information).

It is ECA's intent to award one cooperative agreement of one base year plus two non-competitive continuations (NCCs). Please see section B.) Federal Award Information and NCCs in section D.16. below for additional details.

Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) for more information.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A.1. Authority

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. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

A.2. Purpose

The Mandela Washington Fellowship is the flagship program of the YALI, which also includes the YALI Africa Regional Leadership Centers and the online YALI Network. The objective of the Fellowship is to further develop knowledge, skills, and experience of Fellows to facilitate and empower leadership, cross-cultural exchange, mutual understanding, and the formation of a sustainable, prestigious network of effective leaders in critical sectors in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Fellowship directly supports U.S. foreign policy goals for Sub-Saharan Africa, including strengthening U.S.-Africa relations. The Fellowship provides African leaders with the opportunity to further develop their skills through six-week intensive Leadership Institutes at U.S. colleges and universities, a Summit, an opportunity for approximately 100 Fellows to engage in the PDE, and other follow-on alumni programming.

A.3. Overview of the Leadership Institutes

Leadership Institutes should constitute a comprehensive, executive-style, six-week program designed for Fellows to further develop knowledge, skills, and experience to facilitate and empower leadership in their respective sectors and communities through the tracks of Business, Civic Engagement, and Public Management. Leadership Institutes should be held at an accredited U.S. university or college. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions of a 501(c)3 are eligible to apply as a sub-award recipient; however, the Leadership Institutes should take place on a U.S. college or university campus.

The Leadership Institutes should offer non-credit comprehensive programs that include practical academic content, complementary site visits, leadership development sessions, cultural exchange activities, community service, and networking opportunities. Each Institute should integrate all aspects of the program and examine U.S.-based leadership in one of three tracks: Business, Civic Engagement, or Public Management. Based on these tracks, Institutes should be structured to provide Fellows with practical exposure to leadership approaches in the United States; highlight challenges and successes; and enable Fellows to connect U.S.-based examples to the sub-Saharan African context. The recipient will be responsible for providing guidelines for curricula to the Leadership Institute hosts to promote a consistent level of quality and thematic content at each Institute. In addition to the academic coursework, the Institutes

should include practical hands-on training related to the given theme. Site visits in the community should provide opportunities to observe and participate in varied aspects of American life as they relate to the Institute topic and to discuss lessons learned in the academic program. The award recipient will be responsible for overall coordination of the institutes and should ensure consistency and quality of content across Institutes.

In addition to promoting enhanced knowledge and skills in the Institute track, an important objective of the Institutes is to develop the Fellows' leadership skills. In this context, the academic program should include a robust universal leadership curriculum to be implemented across all three Institute tracks. The leadership component should consist of group discussions, trainings, and exercises that focus on topics such as consensus building, networking, negotiation, collective problem solving, effective communication and public speaking, and management skills. The recipient should also propose and utilize a common leadership assessment that each Fellow will complete and a sample curriculum for Institutes to utilize the results of the leadership assessment.

Institutes should also include a community service component through which the Fellows can experience firsthand the key role of not-for-profit organizations and volunteerism as a core value in U.S.-based civil society. Institutes should highlight the importance of community service and discuss the effects of the activity in the community.

Institutes should provide Fellows with an in-depth examination of specific themes outlined under the three tracks. Fellows should gain both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Institutes should foster ECA's mission to promote mutual understanding between citizens of other countries and citizens of the United States. Institutes should foster an inclusive environment by incorporating speakers from diverse backgrounds and encouraging open and collaborative discussions. In addition, the programs should include robust opportunities for Fellows to meet Americans from a variety of backgrounds, to interact with U.S. peers, and to engage with appropriate student and civic groups to share their experiences and life in their home communities.

Leadership Institute Tracks:

1) Leadership in Business Institutes should provide Fellows with an overview of U.S. entrepreneurial strategies in the for-profit sector and socially-minded enterprises. This track should focus on developing Fellows' skills in business and entrepreneurship while examining the development, history, challenges, and successes of U.S. enterprises and social enterprises, in the United States and globally, with specific relevance to the African continent. Topics may include, but are not limited to: innovation and technology, business plan development, business ethics, the intersection of business with civil society and government, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, international and regional trade, infrastructure and service delivery, strategies for sustainable

business development, climate and environment-focused sustainable business practices, public-private partnerships, navigating a business in times of crisis, creative economy, and financial management, among others. The Institutes should encourage Fellows to formulate innovative and practical plans to expand their engagement in business and/or entrepreneurship in their communities and to engage with others in this area.

2) Leadership in Civic Engagement Institutes should provide Fellows with an overview of how citizens, both as individuals and in groups, have shaped U.S. history, government, and society, including discussion of similarities and contrasts with experiences and opportunities on the African continent. This track should define civic engagement; examine its development in the United States; and build skills in topics such as active citizenship, community-based organizing, advancing inclusive communities and engaging marginalized groups in civic initiatives, intersection of civil society with economic development, business and government, grass-roots activism, strategic planning, social justice, political organizing and leadership, volunteerism, and the ways in which traditional and social media can be leveraged to advance civic causes. The Institutes should encourage Fellows to develop innovative and practical plans to expand their engagement as citizens in their own communities and to work with others in this area as well as mobilizing communities and leveraging partnerships to mitigate the effects of crises.

3) Leadership in Public Management Institutes should provide Fellows with an overview of public management, administration, and leadership, including regional economic and workforce development, public service, financial and resource management, public finance and budgeting, planning and the global knowledge economy, intersection of government with business and civil society, diversity and inclusion policies and initiatives, and domestic and foreign development policies. Topics may include, but are not limited to: rule of law, public sector accountability, transparency and good governance, education, public health, media literacy, media relations and strategic communications, climate change and the environment, key regional issues such as natural resources management and wildlife trafficking, innovative public management solutions in times of crisis, and foreign policy.

A.4. Overview of the Professional Development Experience (PDE)

The award recipient will be responsible for arranging four-week PDEs in the United States for approximately 100 of the Fellows. The Fellows selected for the PDEs will have distinguished records of accomplishment in promoting innovation and positive change in their organizations, institutions, and communities. The PDEs are intended to provide Fellows with substantive professional experiences within U.S. organizations to enhance their leadership skills, expand practical skillsets, and provide opportunities for the Fellows to form mutually beneficial long-term professional relationships with their U.S. counterparts. For U.S. companies and

organizations, the PDEs afford a unique opportunity to benefit from the insights and knowledge of dynamic young African professionals. As PDE Fellows often work in the same sector as the host U.S. organization or company, the PDEs allow the U.S. host to build global networks and expand their work to, or throughout, Africa. PDEs should be designed to offer an on-site, engaging experience for Fellows within relevant agencies and/or organizations. Each Fellow should have one placement for the full duration of the PDE (rather than shorter successive placements) in order to allow the Fellow to get an in-depth understanding of the organization. Each host organization should expect to host only one, or in exceptional cases two Fellows per PDE cohort. In very limited cases, host organizations with multiple offices may host up to three Fellows in different cities. Proposals must discuss how the award recipient, in collaboration with ECA, will recruit and select diverse U.S. host organizations.

To ensure that each Fellow has a substantive professional experience at their PDE, PDEs should involve the commitment of at least one designated host supervisor/mentor who understands the goals and objectives of the Mandela Washington Fellowship. The supervisor/mentor will be able and willing to provide the Fellow professional insight in the appropriate field of expertise.

Please note that the award recipient must secure all placements of PDEs in advance of the arrival of the Fellows in the United States.

A.5. Overview of the Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit

The recipient will be responsible for planning and implementing a Summit either at the beginning or the end of the Leadership Institutes. Fellows will convene for a Summit to forge connections with one another and U.S. leaders from the private, public, and non-profit sectors, setting the stage for long-term engagement. The Summit will occur over the course of three to four days and should include the following aspects: interaction among Fellows and senior U.S. government officials, U.S. civic leaders, and members of the diplomatic community; interaction among Fellows and leaders in climate change and the environment, agriculture, public health, science and technology, business, creative economy, and banking and finance, among others; inspirational speeches from distinguished U.S.-based leaders and/or other prominent leaders; opportunities for Fellows to engage with each other formally and informally, and may include one networking day; workshops and seminars that further complement and reinforce academic themes explored during the Institute and the leadership curriculum; and information sharing on alumni and follow-on activities. The Summit is also an opportunity for host Institute staff to exchange ideas for future programming. Institute staff will participate in a debriefing session with program staff. Applicants should include a plan and timeline outlining Summit programming.

The Summit budget should include all event space and housing and meal arrangements for Fellows and Institute staff. The recipient must propose possible locations for the Summit, including, but not limited to, Washington, DC. The recipient should also be equipped to

accommodate requests for virtual engagement with Fellows if there are requests for video or digital production.

A.6. Overview of the Reciprocal Exchange Component

The recipient will be responsible for administering the Mandela Washington Fellowship Reciprocal Exchange component for a minimum of 100 U.S. professionals. The Reciprocal Exchange component should provide funding opportunities for U.S. citizens from the private, public, and non-profit sectors to collaborate with Fellowship Alumni on projects across Sub-Saharan Africa. Through these projects, experts and leaders should work with Fellows to tackle critical issues such as climate change, good governance, public health, education, and development. Projects should also encourage lasting partnerships, contribute to market or network expansion, and other priority areas, and increase mutual understanding between the United States and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The recipient is responsible for managing the application form for both the U.S. professionals and for Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumni from all cohorts since 2014 (as hosts and project partners) to compete in a merit-based open competition for a Reciprocal Exchange.

A.7. Overview of Alumni/Follow-on Activities

Proposals should provide plans for continued follow-on activities that ensure that ECA-supported programs are not isolated events. Proposed follow-on activities for alumni (Fellows and Reciprocal Exchange participants) should include innovative ideas, must reflect the goals and objectives of the program, and must contribute to ECA's mission to foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and of other countries. The proposal should include an outline and timeline of follow-on alumni programming, information on coordination with existing alumni efforts, and a description of how proposed activities will foster and maintain long-term linkages.

Proposals should include plans for small grant components encouraging alumni to leverage their exchange experience to positively affect their home communities. Proposals should also include a way to recognize outstanding alumni who have a strong record of servant leadership and advocacy on behalf of the Fellowship. Applicants are encouraged to propose ways to provide digital resources to Fellowship alumni to further their professional growth, fund event travel, and support ongoing efforts of Reciprocal Exchange alumni. Proposals should also reserve funds for on-demand alumni activities.

The award recipient is responsible for maintaining an alumni database with updated records of all Mandela Washington Fellowship alumni since 2014. The FY 2024 award recipient will be responsible for working with the FY 2021 award recipient to transfer previous data. Each applicant must confirm that its system for collecting and storing data on participants is compatible with the Bureau's systems. For current and future Fellowship Alumni, the database must continue to include biographical information on all participants, track media mentions and success stories, and include functionality to easily search for notable Fellowship Alumni by

name, Leadership Institute name, cohort year, professional sector, keywords, and other search criteria.

Applicants should designate at least one staff member to oversee alumni activities. The award recipient will report to ECA on the outcomes and effectiveness of all alumni activities and administer an alumni survey throughout the period of the cooperative agreement, as well as provide information on aggregate data and outcomes of the survey. ECA will collaborate with the award recipient on alumni follow-on activities.

A.8. Overview of Recruitment and Selection

Proposals must demonstrate the capacity for the recipient to conduct a recruitment and selection process for Fellows, PDEs (including participants and host organizations), Reciprocal Exchange participants, and Institute Partners. The recipient will be responsible for developing creative and comprehensive plans for the recruitment of applicants through an open competition for all Mandela Washington Fellowship opportunities. The recruitment plans should clearly state the primary purpose and audience for key messages, making sure to differentiate between recruitment and general program marketing and promotion. The recruitment plans should include the development of accessibly designed marketing materials including, but not limited to, print materials (flyers, fact sheets, one pagers, brochures); prerecorded content (radio advertisements, podcasts, etc.); online content (website information, social media campaigns); and outreach to stakeholders in U.S. higher education, sectors related to Fellows' professional backgrounds, and other relevant stakeholders. Successful recruitment plans will provide specific strategies for attracting well-qualified and diverse pools of applicants, as well as a commitment to accessible design and the ability to translate materials into other languages such as French and Portuguese. All aspects of diversity outlined in ECA's Diversity Statement should be addressed in the recruitment plans including, where applicable, institutional, geographic, racial, gender, ethnic, age, religious, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

The recipient will be responsible for creating a Fellow application form that will be posted on the program website for an open competition. The application form and process should align with a comprehensive plan for selection. Additionally, the recipient is responsible for developing and managing a viable recruitment, selection, and placement plan that allows for U.S. Department of State involvement. Selection plans should explore the use and application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the applicant screening and review process, as appropriate and reasonable. Applicants for the Mandela Washington Fellowship should have the option of applying for PDEs. The plan should also include the development of application forms for the Reciprocal Exchange and other alumni opportunities so that U.S.-based professionals and Mandela Washington Fellowship alumni from all cohorts since 2014 (including hosts and project partners) can apply in an open competition. U.S. embassies and consulates and other U.S. government agencies throughout Sub-Saharan Africa will play a significant role in recruitment

and selection. Proposals should include information about how the recipient plans to collaborate with posts in recruitment and selection efforts. The recipient will be responsible for developing training materials and opportunities for embassy employees involved in these efforts, including the planning and implementation of a two to three-day in-person training event to take place in an appropriate and cost-effective location.

A.9. Overview of Outreach

In addition to the recruitment plan, the proposal must include an outline to describe how the Mandela Washington Fellowship will be publicized to various audiences and media outlets, including print, online, and broadcast, to reach the widest possible audience of qualified applicants, potential U.S. host institutions, PDE host organizations, and other relevant audiences. The proposal must also include a community outreach plan to educate U.S. citizens on the Mandela Washington Fellowship, particularly those who will interact with Fellows during the Institutes, Summit, and PDEs. Outreach should include print and virtual content.

Additionally, the proposal should address the recipient's ability to maintain the Mandela Washington Fellowship website and all of its components, including a private Fellowship Portal. The Fellowship Portal should provide additional information about the Fellowship to alumni and selected finalists and alternates. The award recipient must regularly check the website content to ensure that all posted material is current and correct and must submit any new strategies for presenting program information or major revisions of current online materials to ECA in advance for approval. ECA may request that website content be added or removed in a timely manner. On occasion, ECA may request that the recipient assist in promoting and coordinating opportunities for Fellowship Alumni with other elements of YALI including the YALI Network and the YALI Africa Regional Leadership Centers.

Once an award is issued, the recipient should develop a comprehensive outreach plan designed to raise public awareness of the Mandela Washington Fellowship and to demonstrate inclusivity, innovations, and the U.S. and international influence of the program. The recipient is expected to notify and consult ECA before responding to any media inquiries regarding the Fellowship.

Publications, program materials, the website, and all other online platforms, including social media and websites, should explain the mission of the Mandela Washington Fellowship and emphasize the U.S. Department of State's role as the program's sponsor and manager. As such, all materials should note that "The Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and administered by [award recipient]." When applicable, the note should include a link to the program website. This language should appear prominently on all print and electronic materials and should precede any language regarding the role of the award recipient in administering the program. Publications should prominently feature the Mandela Washington Fellowship logo and the U.S. Department of State seal in accordance with established

guidelines. The outreach strategy and all publication materials, including cover designs, must be submitted to ECA for approval prior to publication and dissemination.

Digital and electronic outreach should comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate to ensure all information and communication technology associated with this program is accessible to people with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities.

A.10. Program Administration

ECA is seeking detailed proposals from U.S. public and private non-profit organizations, consortia of organizations, and accredited post-secondary U.S. education institutions meeting the requirements outlined below.

ECA intends to issue one cooperative agreement and is seeking proposals from organizations with the ability to administer a complex recruitment and selection process for Fellows in collaboration with U.S. embassies; develop and oversee Leadership Institutes including recruitment and selection process of host institutions, orientation and program development based on the three tracks, Fellowship support and reasonable accommodations, a robust common leadership curriculum, and support and monitor host staff; organize the Summit; identify, coordinate, support, and monitor PDEs; administer the Reciprocal Exchange component; develop and oversee alumni activities; and manage the program website and Fellowship Portal, among other responsibilities.

Recipients may be U.S. public or private non-profit organizations, a consortium of organizations, and accredited post-secondary U.S. education institutions that will provide approximately 28 sub-awards to host colleges, universities, or non-profit organizations to implement the Leadership Institutes. The majority of Institute activities should take place on a U.S. college or university campus. The recipient will serve as the lead administrator and will be responsible for the oversight of all aspects of this cooperative agreement, including managing and monitoring performance of all sub-award recipients. The FY 2024 award recipient will need to be prepared to work with the FY 2021 award recipient in ensuring the success of the program going forward.

Please see the POGI for more information.

A.11. Program Guidelines

It is essential that proposals provide a detailed and comprehensive narrative describing the objectives of the overall program; Leadership Institute content and curricula; leadership curriculum; budgets; and plans for the Summit, the Reciprocal Exchange component, PDEs, embassy staff training event, and alumni activities. For the Leadership Institutes, the proposal should demonstrate the applicant's ability to recruit host colleges, universities, or non-profit organizations that reflect regional and other diversity, including public, private, urban, rural, minority serving institutions, historically black colleges and universities, and community colleges. Leadership Institutes must take place on a U.S. college or university campus.

A.12. Recipient Responsibilities
The activities and the roles and responsibilities of the recipient for this program are outlined in the attached POGI document.

A.13. Substantial Involvement:
In a cooperative agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. These activities are outlined in the attached POGI document.

A.14. Non-Competitive Continuations (NCCs)
Proposal narratives should include a commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional NCCs, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base year program, with the understanding that the program design, duration, and participant numbers would be similar when/if the subsequent two NCCs are exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation and review to determine if a NCC will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all NCCs.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description above.
Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2024 – $17,885,000; FY 2025 – NCC year-one $17,885,000; next FY 26 – NCC year-two $17,885,000, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.
Approximate Total Funding: $53,655,000. This figure represents base year plus two NCC years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.
Approximate Number of Awards: One
Approximate Average Award: $17,885,000, pending the availability of funds.
Minimum "Floor" of Award: $17,885,000, pending the availability of funds.
Maximum "Ceiling" of Award: $17,885,000 for FY 2024 base year, pending the availability of funds.
Anticipated Award Date: August 1, 2024
Anticipated Project Completion Date: November 30, 2028. This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award – one base year plus two NCC years.
Additional Information: ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

A cooperative agreement will be awarded for a period of 18 months (base year) with NCCs for two additional 18-month periods (NCC years one and two). ECA will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise a NCC at least 90 days in advance of expiration of the current year after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to

exercise a NCC will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

Proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to provide the following, should additional funding become available: 1) six-week Leadership Institutes at U.S. campuses for an additional 100 Fellows (approximately 800 Fellows total), maintaining groups of approximately 25 Fellows per Institute; and 2) a pre-program English language component to take place both virtually and in person for a minimum of 40 Fellows prior to the start of Leadership Institutes.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

C.1. Eligible Applicants

U.S. public and private academic and cultural institutions, exchange-of-persons, and other not-for-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit applications for this competition. Applicants must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements

The following additional eligibility requirements apply to this NOFO announcement:

1.) ECA's grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to $130,000 in ECA funding. ECA anticipates making cooperative agreement, in an amount of $17,885,000 to support all costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

2.) All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, POGI, and the PSI; non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

3.) In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3. & D.5. for more information.

4.) Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the PSI document.

C.3. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds

There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this competition. However, ECA encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs. 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 and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution may be reduced in like proportion.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

D.1. Solicitation Package Location

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Grants.gov website at https://www.grants.gov or from ECA website at https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding.

D.2. Content and Form of Submission

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which consists of required application forms and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.17. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

D.3. Unique Entity Identifier Number

All organizations are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. 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. ***Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required for federal assistance applications. A UEI is issued as part of the required SAM.gov registration below in section D.5.***

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

D.4. Required Proposal Elements

All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed budget, and budget narrative.

D.5. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM)

All organizations must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov. ***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.*** Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

All federal award recipients must maintain a current registration in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting is completed on any issued award. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html

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 number prior to registering in SAM.gov.

D.6. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov (formerly, FAPIIS)

1.) The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

2.) An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. Currently, federal agencies create integrity records in the integrity module of the Contractor Performance Assessment and Reporting System (CPARS) and these records are visible as responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov;

3.) The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

D.7. Required Registration with SAMS Domestic

All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic by accessing https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com and clicking the "create an account" link. SAMS Domestic is the U.S. Department of State's grants management system and is supported by the Department's Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). Recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories that have previously used SAMS Domestic as a U.S. Department of State award recipient do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact the ILMS Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Recipient Organizations and recipient contacts and signatories is available 24 hours, 7 days a week (except federal holidays), and can be reached at 1-888-313-ILMS (4567) or through the ILMS Self Service Portal at https://afsitsm.servicenowservices.com/ilms/.

In the event the ILMS Help Desk is unable to provide you with assistance in a timely manner, please contact ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov and copy the program officer associated with the solicitation.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

D.8. Adherence To All Regulations Governing the J Visa

ECA places critically important emphasis on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The award recipient will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at http://j1visa.state.gov or from:

Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation
U.S. Department of State
SA-5, Floor C2, Room C2L13
2200 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20522

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.9. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) and Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to ECA's authorizing legislation, "diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, geographic location, education, income, socio-economic status, and other diversity dimensions, that may hinder inclusion. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. Programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social, and cultural life in the United States and abroad. Please refer to the "Support of DEIA" review criterion of this document for more information on how this will be reviewed as a part of any application. Please also refer to the "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility" section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating DEIA into the proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," ECA "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Distinct from grants or cooperative agreement monitoring and participant monitoring, performance monitoring is designed to assess progress against a program's goals and objectives. A performance monitoring framework is vital to tracking the direction, pace, and magnitude of change that result from ECA programs.

ECA created the Monitoring Data for ECA (MODE) Framework to measure the performance of ECA programs. **The MODE Framework provides standard indicators and corresponding survey questions to ensure consistent measures across all ECA programs.** More resources and

guidance documents on the MODE Framework are available online at: https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and.

For this proposal, ECA requires the applicant include the MODE Framework objectives and indicators listed below (note that, because not all MODE objectives and indicators are relevant for a program, the numbering below will not be sequential). In addition to the ECA-required objectives and indicators, applicants may also select additional MODE Framework indicators (see the Indicator Book on the MODE Framework website), or design custom objectives and indicators that are specific to the proposed program and this proposal.

- Demographic Questions as outlined in the Indicator Book on page vi, and Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) (https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and)
- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
    - Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities.
        - E1.1.01: Percent of participants reporting that their program experience offered opportunities to engage with other cultures
        - E1.1.04: Percent of participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government (core indicator)
        - E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator)
        - E1.1.10: Percent of foreign participants who traveled to the United States for the first time during their program (core indicator)
        - E1.1.11: Percent of American participants indicating a change in their understanding of their host country's culture and values
        - E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American people (core indicator)
        - E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator)
        - E1.1.19: Percent of participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries.
        - E2.0.01: Percent of foreign participants that volunteer in their host communities
        - E2.0.04: Number of hours that foreign participants spend volunteering in their host communities
    - Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster participants' belief that civic engagement benefits communities/countries

        - E2.2.01: Percent of participants who have more confidence in their ability to have an impact in their home country (core indicator)
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
        - E3.0.02: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of Americans (core indicator)
        - E3.0.04: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of third country nationals
        - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries
        - E4.0.01: Percent of participants reporting increases in their job skills as a result of their program participation
        - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation
    - Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
        - E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
        - E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts (core indicator)
        - E4.1.04: Number of professional placements
        - E4.1.11: Number of American reciprocal exchange participants
- Objective 6: Increase Capacity of ECA partner institutions to achieve program strategic goals
    - Sub-Objective 6.1: Increase capacity of implementing partners and educational institutions for the internationalization of programs
        - E6.1.02: Number of exchange participants from or hosted by Minority-Serving Institutions participating in ECA (both funded and private sector) exchanges (core indicator)
- Objective 8: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau's resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships
        - E8.0.03: Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

Performance Monitoring Plans (PMPs)

ECA recommends the use of a PMP to serve as the primary reference document for performance monitoring for this award. If used, the PMP is an important part of any proposal, as it outlines how the applicant plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions. A PMP document that includes all MODE Framework indicators is a part of this solicitation's attachments. Specific instructions on how to modify the PMP to be responsive to this solicitation are included in that document. While ECA recommends the applicant use the PMP format provided, this is not a requirement. If a PMP is not included in the proposal, applicants

should provide similar information to that found in the suggested PMP format, in a presentation of your choice. A training on how to complete a PMP is available here: https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and . Successful PMPs (or similar documentation) should include the following:

- Objectives. Programmatic objectives are statements of the condition(s) that state what the program is designed to achieve. Objectives are therefore bound by the resources and timeframe of the program and must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART; see the ECA Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Innovation (MELI) Unit's pages on the ECA website for more information: https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-evaluation-division/capacity-building). In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the MODE Framework, the Functional Bureau Strategy (https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau), or other applicant-designed program-specific objectives.
- Indicators. Performance indicators are measures used to gauge progress toward programmatic objectives and sub-objectives. Indicators should be as specific as possible (following the SMART principles) and include any proposed disaggregations (meaning, breakdowns of the data by subgroups, such as gender or country; the PMP lists the demographic questions required to obtain the information necessary to report the disaggregations). Each indicator should also include a target number to be achieved. A target is a planned level of result to be achieved within an explicit timeframe.
    - If you do not use the PMP format provided, note that any performance monitoring reference document the applicant submits should include the information in the column headers (Indicator Name, Definition, Target, Survey Question, etc.) in the PMP attachment at a minimum.
    - In addition to those indicators outlined in above, the applicant may propose additional custom, program-specific indicators in the PMP (ECA recommends the proposed PMPs include a minimum of one indicator for each custom programmatic objective).
    - During the period of performance of the award, the ECA program office may further revise, add, or remove indicators. Therefore, the applicant's PMP and data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established.

Award recipients are responsible for collecting indicator data only on participant outcomes during the period of performance of the award itself (see the PMP for guidelines as to when these data collection efforts should occur). ECA will measure outcomes of ECA participants at one, three, five, and 10 years after the exchange has ended to capture the long-term impact of ECA programming unless otherwise specified in the NOFO and/or POGI. In this instance, the recipient will be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to de-duplicate questions and minimize potential survey fatigue.

Award recipients will be required to submit an upload of the raw data (in CSV format) along with the State Assistance Management System Domestic (SAMS-D RPM) reporting (see below). Regardless of the survey platform used, **all** MODE Framework survey questions outlined above are **required** (i.e., should be forced response); please see the Consent Language in the MODE Framework Indicator Book for more information on how to convey this to participants/survey respondents.

Program Performance M&E Narrative
The applicant should include information within the program narrative section(s) of the proposal that outlines how the applicant intends to measure the indicators listed above. This will be separate from the PMP and should include but not be limited to:

- An overview of resources available to the applicant that outline the team structure and responsibilities surrounding performance monitoring.
- The mechanism(s) through which surveys and other data collection tools (if applicable) will be administered, including which platform will be used, and when and how surveys will be advertised to participants – detailing strategies to ensure adequate survey response rates (https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/eca_eval_division_survey_response_rates.pdf), and to reduce selection and non-response bias.
- A brief explanation of data analysis and reporting procedures.
- An overview of a proposed learning plan and feedback loops to ensure that the Grant Officer (GO)/Grant Officer Representative (GOR) are informed on performance monitoring issues at regular intervals.

SAMS-D RPM Reporting Requirements
The SAMS-D is a database solution that serves as the official system of record for all U.S. Department of State and ECA awards. The Results Performance Monitoring (RPM) module within SAMS-D is an extension module that enables users to report performance monitoring data in the same system where they currently manage federal assistance actions. As part of ECA's efforts to streamline data collection and management, the recipient(s) of this award will be required to input performance reporting data outlined in this solicitation into the SAMS-D RPM. The data stored in the SAMS-D RPM will provide ECA with a bureau-wide, uniform M&E reporting tool that is already linked with other elements of the awards familiar to existing awardees.

D.11. Virtual Exchange Component
When changing political, health, environmental, or other similar circumstances require a suspension or halt of in-person activities and where ECA determines that a virtual alternative is appropriate and viable, award recipients should demonstrate the ability and capacity to transition from in-person to virtual exchanges.

In addition to planning for virtual exchange activities if in-person programming is prohibited, ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s) is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project-by-project basis.

D.12. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients

All ECA funded Recipients must adhere to the requirements in ECA's Communications Guidance on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

D.13. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial

ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as "America250" – a truly global celebration. As the period of performance for this award is scheduled to cover part or all of calendar year (CY) 2026, the applicant may wish to consider ways the program can celebrate America250. Any America250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided America250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

D.14. Budget Format

Applicants must submit SF-424A (Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs) along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget, a detailed line-item budget, and a budget narrative. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

The provided budget format is provided as an aid in organizing the budget, it is suggested but not required as a submission format for your proposal budget.

D.15. Key Personnel

ECA recommends that the applicant identify intended key personnel positions via an asterisk (*) or other marking in the proposal budget, budget narrative, or a separate appendix. If not provided in the application, recipients must submit the names, titles, and brief biographical sketches of key personnel to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions, VI. Recipient Responsibility and Compliance with

Federal Requirements (link to: https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/).

D.16. NCCs

Pending successful performance and the availability of funds this award will utilize NCCs as discussed in Section A above.

D.16.a. For competitions that will exercise a NCC applicants must submit:

1.) The SF-424A which must include the budget request amount for the base-year of the program.
2.) A detailed proposal narrative and budget for the base year of funding (Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instruction Document (PSI) for general budget guidance.). The narrative should also include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional NCC years, pending successful program performance and the availability of funds.
3.) An abbreviated/estimated summary budget presenting the total projected costs for the anticipated total duration of programming (base year, plus two NCC years).

D.16.b. To exercise the NCC mechanism the recipient will be required to submit:

1.) Performance and financial reports on time.
2.) A request in writing to ECA at least 30 days in receipt of the NCC invitation.
3.) A summary budget that projects expenses through the end of the current year.
4.) A detailed budget outlining expenses for the requested NCC year.
5.) A brief narrative to support the continuation of the award.

D.16.c. For awards using NCCs, in addition to the Substantial Involvement for the Cooperative Agreement, the ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will:

1.) Closely monitor the recipient's performance through site visits, desk audits, mandatory performance and financial reports, consultations, and other forms of communication and dialogue before exercising additional NCCs. (Additional details regarding monitoring and oversight of the program by ECA representatives will be provided at the time the base-year award is made.)

2.) Review and assess all quarterly or semi-annual program and financial reports.
   a. All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up to date before ECA will exercise additional NCCs.
   b. Any/all concerns, issues, or modifications requested by the Grants Officer or Program Officer to the original program design or method of implementation must be responded to in writing.
   c. The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will review and advise of ECA's approval or disapproval of the response before issuing subsequent NCCs.

3.) Prior Grants Officer approval is required to utilize the remainder from an unobligated balance from a prior funding period to the subsequent funding period. If the Grants Officer determines that some or all of the unobligated funds are not necessary to perform the program activity, the Grants Officer may decline the Recipient's request to utilize the remainder from the unobligated balance.

    The Grants Officer may, at their discretion, use the unobligated balance to reduce or offset future funding for a subsequent funding period. An unobligated balance at the end of a funding period is not sufficient justification to utilize the remainder of funds. A final determination and approval to utilize the remainder of any funds will be communicated via a cost amendment with adjustment, if any, to new obligation amounts.

The request to utilize the remainder from an unobligated balance must include:

1.) A brief narrative why funds remain unobligated and how the unobligated funds will be used to complete the previously approved goals and objectives of the program.

2.) A detailed budget that reflects the amount of unobligated funds to date, and anticipated expenditures in the subsequent period of performance for all cost categories under the authorized budget.

D.17. Application Deadline and Method of Submission
Application Deadline Date: Tuesday, April 30, 2024
Method of Submission: Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (https://www.grants.gov). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the "Search Grants" portion of the system.

D.18. Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures
Eligible organizations should follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html).

D.18.a. How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov
Applicants should read instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

The registration process can take up to four weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines. Applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with

Grants.gov. Organization applicants can find complete instructions here: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

D.18.b. How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov
For access to complete instruction on how to apply for Notice of Funding Opportunities on Grants.gov, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html

D.18.c. Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues
Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission issues to:

Grants.gov Customer Support
Contact Center Phone: 800-518-4726
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays.
Email: support@grants.gov

D.18.d. Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission
Applicants have until 11:59 p.m., Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after the application deadline date and time will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system and will be found technically ineligible.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When ECA successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgement of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Please also be mindful of any Grants.gov generated error messages that may appear during the application process as they may result in some documents not transmitting correctly.

Applicants using slow internet should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role. The

Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "Applicant FAQs" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov. Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

D.19. Intergovernmental Review of Applications
Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1. Review Process
ECA will check that all proposals meet the technical requirements in this solicitation. Proposals that do not meet the guidelines, including those under the eligibility section above or in the PSI, will be ineligible for further review.

All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office before being reviewed by an ECA grant panel and may be reviewed by Public Diplomacy sections overseas, State Department regional bureaus, or other State Department offices, as appropriate. All reviewers, including the ECA grant panels will review any eligible proposals based on the criteria below. Recommended proposals will be reviewed for compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines, and assessed for risk. Final funding decisions are made by the U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Only an ECA Grant Officer has the final authority to issue assistance awards.

E.2. Review Criteria

An ECA grants panel will competitively evaluate all technically eligible applications according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation.

1.) **Quality of the program idea:** Proposals should be original, well-defined, and relevant to ECA's mission.
2.) **Support of DEIA:** Proposals should show how the program and your institution supports ECA's policy on diversity. Proposals should have a clear DEIA plan that is integrated into all aspects of program administration, design, content, and implementation. Proposals should demonstrate how DEIA will enhance the program's goals, objectives, and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated DEIA plan and not simply express general support for the concept of DEIA.
3.) **Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs and responsible fiscal management. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients, including the timely submission of reports, and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
4.) **Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity after the ECA supported program ends, ensuring that programs are not isolated events.
5.) **Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Proposals should have a fully developed M&E plan that includes goals, objectives, and indicators. The plan should be feasible and aligned with the M&E section of this solicitation. Proposals should include a realistic learning plan that outlines how your organization plans to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices. All submitted M&E plans will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided at least the required information outlined in the M&E section of this solicitation and demonstrated the applicant's capacity to carry out the M&E plan.
6.) **Cost-effectiveness and cost sharing:** Proposals should keep the overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost share through other private sector support and institutional direct funding contributions.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

F.1. Award Notices

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal ECA procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the ECA's Grants Division. 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 as identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition following the completion of the review process.

F.2. 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.

Terms and Conditions applicable to all ECA agreements include:

- Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.
- U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions.

For a copy of the OMB Guidance cited, please download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

For a copy of the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, or to review other Department of State assistance information, please download from:
https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/

F.3. Reporting Requirements
Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted. All reports must be submitted in a timely manner. For planning purposes, applicants can expect to provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

1.) Performance Progress Reports (PPRs) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual reports shall be due 120 calendar days after the cooperative agreement; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer.) The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic.

2.) The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: http://www.dpm.psc.gov/. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to SAMS Domestic, in the same manner specified for the programmatic

reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Cooperative Agreements/Grants.

In the event you are having difficulty uploading reports and the ILMS help desk is not providing sufficient assistance, please email ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov.

3.) A final program and financial report no more than 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award.

4.) Because the competition will allow for the exercise of NCCs, applicants must submit program and financial reports on time. The due dates for these reports will be included in the cooperative agreement. The program and financial reports must demonstrate substantial progress by addressing progress towards the original approved goals and objectives, relative activities and events, and supporting fiscal data. The reports will be reviewed by both the assigned Grant Officer and Program Officer.

Award recipients will be required to present findings from their data collection efforts to ECA in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) information.)

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to ECA upon request.

F.4. Program Data Requirements: Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with ECA as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

1.) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.

2.) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three workdays prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Jessica Zanikos, U.S. Department of State, Office of Academic Exchanges, ECA/A/E/USS, telephone: 202-374-6991, ZanikosJL@state.gov**.**

All correspondence with ECA concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

H. Other Information

Notice

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

Scott Weinhold February 29, 2024
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State