

**U.S. EMBASSY OTTAWA
PUBLIC DIPLOMACY SECTION
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
The 2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF)**

The Embassy of the United States in Canada announces an open competition for past participants (“alumni”) of U.S. government-funded and U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs to submit applications to the 2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF 2024). We seek proposals from teams of at least two alumni that meet all program eligibility requirements below. Exchange alumni interested in participating in AEIF 2024 should submit proposals to AlumniCanada@state.gov by March 1, 2024.

A. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

AEIF provides alumni of U.S. government-sponsored and facilitated exchange programs with funding to expand on skills gained during their exchange experience to design and implement innovative solutions to global challenges facing their communities. Since its inception in 2011, AEIF has funded nearly 500 alumni-led projects around the world through a competitive global competition. This year, AEIF 2024 will provide funding for public service projects in support of U.S. foreign policy goals and Mission Canada priorities.

Mission Canada will accept public service projects proposed and managed by teams of at least two (2) alumni that support the following themes:

- Promoting democracy, human rights, and social justice.
- Working toward climate solutions that foster resilient and prosperous communities.
- Strengthening underrepresented small- to medium-sized entrepreneur networks.
- Promoting security and defense cooperation.
- Strengthening Arctic partnerships.

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

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Announcement posted: December 6, 2023

Closing date for applications: March 1, 2024

Award amounts: Between US \$5,000 to US \$35,000

Type of Funding: Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act.

Anticipated program start date: Mid-July 2024 (based on requirement to release funding 45 days after proposal selection, which will occur NLT end of May 2024)
Length of performance period: Proposed programs should be completed in 24 months or less.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants:

The following individuals are eligible to apply:

- Applicants who are alumni of a U.S. government-funded or sponsored exchange program (<https://alumni.state.gov/list-exchange-programs>) or a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program (<https://j1visa.state.gov/>).
- Projects teams that include at least two (2) alumni.
- Alumni who are U.S. citizens may not submit proposals, but U.S. citizen alumni may participate as team members in a project.
- Alumni teams may be comprised of alumni from different exchange programs and different countries.
- Applications must be submitted by exchange alumni or alumni associations of U.S. government exchange alumni. No other organizations are eligible to apply. Exchange alumni can partner with not-for-profit or non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions to implement project activities. The grant can be issued to the individual alumni or the partner organization.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Inclusion of cost share is not a requirement of this opportunity. “Cost sharing” refers to the practice of splitting the costs of a grant program between the U.S. government and the grantee organization or individual. Applicants are not required to share costs, but a cost share must be identified in the budget proposal if an alumni team wishes to use cost sharing.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

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. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

Applicants are only allowed to submit **one** proposal.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Notice of Funding Opportunity and Proposal Submission Instructions

Application and budget forms required below are available on the [U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Canada](#) website under “[AEIF Proposal Form](#)” and “[AEIF Budget Form](#).”

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible. Applications and budgets must be submitted using the official AEIF 2024 application and budget forms.

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity;
- The proposal addresses all questions in the official AEIF 2024 application form;
- All documents are in English;
- The budget is in U.S. dollars and is submitted using the designated AEIF 2024 budget form;
- All pages are numbered.

The following documents and information are **required**:

1. Mandatory application forms

- [SF-424](#) (Application for Federal Assistance – organizations) or [SF-424-I](#) (Application for Federal Assistance – individuals)
- [SF424A](#) (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)
- [SF424B](#) (Assurances for Non-Construction programs) *Note: This form is only required for individuals and for organizations not registered in SAM.gov*

2. 2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund Proposal Form (see link in section D.1. above)

1. **About your Project:** Please provide information on the title of your project, the requested budget total, and the primary location of the project. Projects need to take place outside of the U.S. and its territories.
2. **Project Team Information:** At least two exchange alumni team members are required for a project to be considered for funding. Applications need to provide names and contact information as well as descriptions of the role each team member will have in the project, their experience,

qualifications, and ability to carry out that role. Applicants need to indicate what proportion of the team member's time will be used in support of the project.

3. **Problem Statement:** A short narrative that outlines the proposed project, including challenge/s to be addressed, project objectives, and anticipated impact.
4. **Project Goals and Objectives:** The goal/s of the proposed project need to describe what the project is intended to achieve and include the objectives which support the goal/s. Objectives should be specific, measurable, and realistically achievable in a set time frame.
5. **Project Methods, Design, and Timeline:** A description of how the project is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal/s. This should include a description of the project's direct and indirect beneficiaries as well as a plan on how to continue the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable. The proposed timeline for the project activities should include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events. Applicants may also submit proposed workshop or training agendas and materials.
6. **Beneficiaries:** An estimated number of direct and indirect beneficiaries of your proposed project.
7. **Local Project Partners:** A list of partners who will support the proposed project, if applicable.
8. **Communication Plan:** The communication plan should include a communication and outreach strategy for promoting the proposed project. It may include social media, websites, print news, or other forms of media intended to use to share information about the project to beneficiaries and the public. Communications should include AEIF 2024, Exchange Alumni, and U.S. Embassy branding.
9. **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** The Monitoring and Evaluation component of the proposal should outline in detail how the proposal's activities will advance the program's goals and objectives. This should include any outcomes showing a change in knowledge, awareness, and attitudes; improved quality of services; increased capacity at a school, group; etc. Proposals should also include how the grantee will measure the impact of planned activities.

3. 2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund Budget Form with Budget Narrative (see link in section D.1. above)

Applicants must submit a detailed budget and budget narrative justification utilizing the template provided. Line-item expenditures should be listed in the greatest possible detail. Budgets shall be submitted in U.S. dollars and final grant agreements will be conducted in U.S. dollars.

4. Attachments:

- Official permission letters, if required for program activities
- Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov) is required unless the application is for individuals rather than organizations.

E. FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

AEIF 2024 does not support the following activities or costs, and the selection committee will deem applications involving any of these activities or costs ineligible:

- Any airfare to/from the United States and its territories
- Activities that take place in the United States or its territories
- Staff salaries, office space, and overhead/operational expenses
- Large items of durable equipment or construction programs
- Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments, or entertainment
- Academic or scientific research
- Charitable or development activities
- Provision of direct social services to a population
- Individual scholarships
- Social travel/visits
- Gifts or prizes
- Duplication of existing programs
- Institutional development of an organization
- Venture capital, for-profit endeavors, or charging a fee for participation in a project
- Support for specific religious activities
- Fund-raising campaigns
- Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation

F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Evaluation Criteria: The U.S. Embassy Ottawa or Mission Canada Consulate Public Diplomacy Sections will use the criteria outlined below to evaluate all applications. The proposals will be reviewed by a Selection Committee made up of regional and exchange program experts located at the Department of State in Washington, DC. Panelists will use the criteria below to review and evaluate applications.

Relevance to Application Theme

The proposal provides sufficient information on how the activities will support the theme(s) of the competition. The narrative explains any relevant local context the D.C. Selection Committee may not be aware of in relation to this project. Proposed project ideas must be public diplomacy in nature (i.e. not development or military).

Purpose and Summary, Description, and Implementation Plan

When developing the purpose, summary, description, and implementation plan, applicants should aim to make all descriptions clear, concise, and compelling. Reviewers will judge the proposals based on the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the community where it is undertaken. Does the project address an important gap of understanding or need? If the aim of the project is achieved, how will existing knowledge or practice be improved? What audience do the applicants hope to reach with this project? How many will participate? How will they be selected?

Degree of Alumni Involvement

Projects must include the involvement of at least two exchange alumni. They may be the project team leaders or collaborate directly with the Public Diplomacy Section in formulating the project. More than two alumni may comprise the team, however, the minimum is two. As the team leaders, the alumni must be closely involved in project planning, implementation, etc. Applicants should ensure that the proposal includes the following information for each alumni team member: first name, last name, e-mail address, exchange program, country of citizenship, and roles and responsibilities.

Participation and Support from Local Partners

The proposal demonstrates buy-in and support from the community where the project will take place. Local partner involvement is a strong sign that there is community support and that the project will engage a broad array of experts, such as subject matter experts, community centers, academic institutions, businesses, local/national government, non-governmental organizations, American Spaces, etc.

Evaluation and Impact of the Project

A monitoring & evaluation (M&E) plan is pivotal to project implementation and important tracking progress towards the project's objectives and goals. An M&E plan should consider the data needed to effectively monitor progress toward specific outputs and outcomes as well as how that data collection will be accomplished. Well-crafted indicators should be used to understand a program's progress toward the desired results. An M&E plan should be reviewed for the following:

- Completion
- Applicability and logic of objectives and indicators
- Clear approach to monitoring
- Adherence to SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely)
- Feasibility of baselines and targets
- Data quality plan
- Capacity to implement plan

Communication, Media, and Outreach Plan

The project should include a clear plan and timeline for how and when the team will share information about the project. It is important to ensure that the U.S. Embassy gets recognition throughout the process, if circumstances permit.

Budget and Budget Narrative

The budget and narrative justification are sufficiently detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities. The results and proposed outcomes justify the total cost of the project. Budget items are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

Disclaimer: This notice is subject to availability of funding. U.S. Embassy Ottawa does not guarantee availability of funding by receiving applications under this announcement. Only successful applicants will be contacted.

G. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. Guidelines for Budget Justification

Please refer to Funding Restrictions in section E for costs not supported through the 2024 AEIF.

- **Venue Costs:** Calculate costs for renting space for project-related activities such as workshops or other training activities. Consider looking for donated space first. If donated space is not possible, costs should be reasonable based on the local environment. All expenses must be itemized and explained.
- **Promotional Items and Advertising:** These items aim to amplify your project. All requests should be reasonable and relevant to the project. All expenses must be itemized and explained.
- **Meals and Beverage:** Include reasonable costs for snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and meals if essential to the project. Break down meals by the cost per person per meal. All expenses must be itemized and explained.
- **Speaker/Consultant/Training Fees:** Speaker: Maximum of \$250 per day for full programming. Trainer: Maximum of \$250 per day or \$25 per hour. Consider asking fellow Alumni with expertise to cost-share speaker/training fees. Consultant: A reasonable consultant fee may be included by Alumni for project management and oversight. However, consider cost-sharing as the AEIF cannot provide salary type expenses. All expenses must be itemized and explained.
- **Lodging and Per Diem:** List per diem rates and hotel costs which directly support the implementation of the project and indicate single or double occupancy. Per diem rates should be calculated according to the U.S. government allowable rates or be adjusted to local prices if appropriate. Please consult with your U.S. Embassy/Consulate. All expenses must be itemized and explained.
- **Travel:** If the program involves travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel. Estimate the costs of travel for this project, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. Costs can include in-country and intraregional air fare or local travel costs required for the actual implementation

of the project. Travel between the U.S. and project country is not supported. The AEIF does not support travel in business class or higher. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

- Supplies, Materials, Equipment: Include general office supplies, computer software, consumable automotive supplies (i.e. fuel), small equipment such as laptops, projector, etc., and expendable materials (i.e. paper, paint). Rent equipment rather than purchase if it is more cost-efficient. All expenses must be itemized and explained.
- Other: Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. Commonly cited items are administrative and accounting costs, shipping costs for materials and equipment, and monitoring and evaluation. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

2. Federal Award Administration Information

The grant award will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The DS-1909 assistance award agreement is the authorizing document, and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the DS-1909 grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Payment Method: Payments will be made in Canadian dollars to a Canadian bank account via electronic fund transfer, in allotments mutually pre-determined between the grantee and the Grants Officer. U.S. Embassy Ottawa maintains the right to withhold final payment until receipt of the closing grant reports.

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. Closing reports are due within 120 days of the grant's end date.

H. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

Questions about the grant application process should be directed to:
AlumniCanada@state.gov.