Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY 2022 John McCain Study of the U.S. Institute (SUSI) for Student Leaders on the Rule of Law and Public Service
Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0008635
Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.009
Key Date/Application Deadline: April 18, 2022

Executive Summary: The Study of the U.S. Branch (ECA/A/E/USS), Office of Academic Exchange Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), invites proposal submissions from accredited U.S. post-secondary education institutions (military colleges, community colleges, liberal arts colleges, public and private universities) and other U.S. public and private non-profit organizations (see Section C. Eligibility Information) for the design and implementation of the John McCain Study of the U.S. Institute (SUSI) for Student Leaders on the Rule of Law and Public Service. The SUSI will take place over the course of five weeks in summer 2023. See details in section A.4. Program Administration.

The John McCain SUSI for Student Leaders on the Rule of Law and Public Service will provide a multinational group of undergraduate students from military and law enforcement colleges and universities with a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions. The Institute will focus on the theme of the rule of law and public service and will be five weeks, including a three-to-four-week academic residency at a U.S. academic institution and a one-to-two-week integrated educational study tour. The academic residency should take place on a U.S. university or college campus and should include academic coursework; leadership and skills development sessions; community service activities; opportunities for interaction with speakers from diverse backgrounds; and interaction with American peers. The study tour should complement the academic residency and take participants to another region of the United States, as well as Washington, DC. The program should include opportunities for continued follow-on engagement once participants return home. See section A. Program Description for further information.

The award recipient will be responsible for planning, overseeing, and implementing the SUSI, including the administration, oversight, and management of the program. 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. See section C. Eligibility Information for additional details.

It is the Bureau's intent to award a cooperative agreement of $400,000 for one base year, plus two non-competitive continuations for an estimated total amount of $1,200,000 over three years. The awarding of the non-competitive continuations in FY 2023 and FY 2024 is contingent on the availability of funding and successful performance. Please see section B. Federal Award

Information below for additional details. **ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets, participant numbers and countries, Institute theme and subtopics, and Institute formats based on program needs and the availability of U.S. government funding.**

A. Program Description:

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.1. Purpose: Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders are intensive academic programs that provide groups of foreign undergraduate students with a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture, and institutions. SUSIs include academic sessions; an integrated study tour; leadership and skills development; community service activities; and opportunities to interact with a wide range of Americans. The primary goal is to provide foreign student leaders with an in-depth examination of a specific field of study while developing leadership skills and improving participants' understanding of the United States.

A.2. Overview: The SUSI should be a total of five weeks in length. Participants should spend no more than four weeks at an academic host institution and a minimum of one week (maximum two weeks) on an integrated educational study tour. The educational study tour should directly complement the academic residency and should include visits to other locations and sites of interest in the area surrounding the host institution as well as to another geographic region of the United States.

The academic program should include interactive lectures, group discussions, experiential learning activities, and educational exercises exploring the rule of law and public service. Leadership and skills development sessions, a core component of the program, should focus on teambuilding, collective problem solving, and effective communication, among other skills. Therefore, participants should gain both theoretical knowledge and practical skills through the academic residency. The SUSI should foster an inclusive environment by incorporating speakers from diverse backgrounds and encouraging open and collaborative discussion. The SUSI should also include a community service component that introduces participants to the concept of volunteerism in the United States and allows participants to interact with diverse groups of Americans, including veterans, through community service activities. Once participants return home, the program should include opportunities for continued follow-on engagement with their fellow SUSI alumni. Activities could include, but are not limited to, webinars, workshops,

collaborative publications, mentorship, or other ways to continue building on the five-week SUSI experience.

The SUSI will take place in summer 2023 with up to 20 foreign undergraduate students from military and law enforcement colleges and universities. The SUSI should take place on an accredited U.S. university or college campus. One cooperative agreement of up to $400,000 will support the program in the FY 2022 base year of funding.

The SUSI should foster ECA's mission to promote mutual understanding between citizens of other countries and citizens of the United States. Thus, the program should include robust opportunities for participants to meet Americans from a variety of backgrounds, interact with their U.S. peers, and speak to appropriate student and civic groups about their experiences and life in their home countries. **Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document for more information.**

ECA's goal is to conduct the John McCain SUSI for Student Leaders on the Rule of Law and Public Service in person in summer 2023. However, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on travel and university operations, it is unclear when current travel restrictions and health advisories will allow for in-person program activities to take place. As such, proposals should include language to demonstrate maximum flexibility, creativity, and a rapid response capability for program planning and administration. Applicants should also include plans to ensure continuity of services should the current situation continue for an extended period of time. The applicant should present innovative options for virtual activities to augment and/or substitute for in-person engagement with all program stakeholders if exchange travel is limited or not possible.

A.3. Institute Theme: The John McCain Study of the U.S. Institute for Student Leaders on the Rule of Law and Public Service should provide up to 20 undergraduate students from military and law enforcement colleges and universities with a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions by examining the ways in which the rule of law supports American democracy. The program should also recognize the leadership of the late Senator John McCain and the values and principles he upheld in his lifetime commitment to public service. To that end, the SUSI should aim to develop participants' leadership skills to prepare them for future positions in public service. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the SUSI should provide participants with an overview of U.S. government including the three branches of U.S. government; the U.S. Constitution; and U.S. federalism. Discussions should explore the rule of law as it relates to the protection of democratic institutions and human rights; democratic governance and anti-corruption measures; and citizen security. Other topics may include but are not limited to civilian control of the military; healthy civil/military relations, international alliances, national security, U.S. foreign policy, and countering authoritarianism. Participants should have opportunities to meet with U.S. leaders from diverse backgrounds, particularly those serving in the public and voluntary sectors, to offer a balanced view of the rule of law and public service in the United States.

A.4. Program Administration: ECA is seeking detailed proposals from U.S. public and private non-profit organizations and accredited post-secondary U.S. higher education institutions (military colleges, community colleges, liberal arts colleges, public and private universities) meeting the eligibility requirements outlines under section C. Eligibility Information below. ECA intends to issue one cooperative agreement for the design, oversight, and implementation of this Institute. All proposals should demonstrate thematic expertise, regional expertise, and/or experience working with students with military backgrounds. Participating countries will be determined by ECA in coordination with regional bureaus and public affairs sections at U.S. embassies abroad.

ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets, participant numbers and countries, Institute themes and subtopics, and Institute formats based on program needs and the availability of U.S. government funding.

A.5. Participants: Participants in the John McCain SUSI for Student Leaders on the Rule of Law and Public Service will be highly motivated undergraduate students from military and law enforcement colleges and universities from around the world. All participants will be proficient in English. The SUSI will host up to 20 student leaders. The recipient will NOT participate in the selection of participants. The U.S. embassy and consulates in each participating country will nominate candidates and ECA will make final participant selections. Every effort will be made to select a gender-balanced group. ECA will send a final list of participants to the award recipient in the spring prior to the summer program. Please note that ECA reserves the right to amend participating countries should conditions change in the nominating country or if other countries are identified as U.S. priorities for other regions. Please see the **Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI)** document for more information on participants.

A.6. Program Guidelines: The award recipient is responsible for the conception, structure, and monitoring of all aspects of the SUSI and follow-on activities. Proposals must provide a detailed and comprehensive narrative describing the goals and objectives of the entire project. The proposal must include an academic syllabus and calendar demonstrating proposed activities and how they relate to the overall goals of the entire project. Proposals should also include descriptions of pre-departure preparation and logistics; administrative details and a staffing plan; plans for monitoring and communication with a sub-recipient (if applicable); incorporation of a diversity and inclusion framework into all aspects of the program; media and outreach plans; budget and budget narrative; and follow-on activities for, and engagement with, alumni. In addition, the proposal should include a summary of the applicant's experience and expertise with the program theme. The academic residency component of the SUSI must take place on a U.S. college or university campus.

Please see section D. Application and Submission Information for application submission requirements. Proposals will be reviewed on the basis of their responsiveness to the six review criteria listed in section E. Application Review Information in this NOFO. The accompanying POGI provides program-specific guidelines that all proposals must fully address.

A.7. Substantial Involvement: In a cooperative agreement, the Study of the U.S. Branch (ECA/A/E/USS) is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. The Branch may request that the award recipient make modifications to the academic residency and/or educational travel components of the program. The award recipient will be required to obtain approval of significant program changes in advance of their implementation. The activities and the roles and responsibilities of the Department and your organization are outlined in the attached Project, Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document.

A.8. Non-Competitive Continuations: Proposal narratives should include a commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional non-competitive continuations, 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 non-competitive continuations are exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if a non-competitive continuation will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all non-competitive continuations.

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 2022 base year, up to $400,000, pending availability of funds; FY 2023 non-competitive continuation year one, up to $400,000, pending successful performance and the availability of funds; FY 2024 non-competitive continuation year two, up to $400,000, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.
Approximate Total Funding: $1,200,000. This figure represents base year plus two non-competitive continuation years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.
Approximate Number of Awards: One.
Approximate Average Award: $400,000, pending the availability of funds.
Floor of Award Range: None.
Ceiling of Award Range: $400,000, pending the availability of funds.
Anticipated Award Date: September 1, 2022, pending the availability of FY 2022 funds.
Anticipated Project Completion Date: August 31, 2026. This date reflects the anticipation duration of the awards – one base year plus two non-competitive continuation years.

Additional Information: A cooperative agreement will be awarded for a period of 16 months (base year) with non-competitive continuations for a second and third period of 16 months months each to ensure adequate time for post-Institute follow-on activities. The total award period is 48 months (4 years). ECA will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise a non-competitive continuation 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 non-competitive continuation will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

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.

All applicants must also have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and be registered in SAM.gov (see additional information about this requirement in D.3. and D.5. below).

C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements: The following additional eligibility requirements apply to this NOFO announcement:

a. ECA grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to $130,000. ECA anticipates making one cooperative agreement in an amount of $1,200,000 to support 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.

b. All proposals must comply with the following or they will result in a proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process. It is ECA's intent to award one (1) cooperative agreement to one applicant organization to administer one SUSI under this competition.

c. 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 Proposal Submission Instructions (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, recipients 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 recipients 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 ECA's website at https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding or from the Grants.gov website at https://www.grants.gov.

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: Applicants are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access http://www.dnb.com or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (Data Universal Numbering System or DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package. For more detailed instructions for obtaining a UEI (DUNS) number, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html

D.4. Required Proposal Elements: All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative, budget, and budget narrative.

D.5. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM): All federal award applicants 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.

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. Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

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

D.6. Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System (FAPIIS): Prior to making a Federal Assistance award over $250,000, the Federal agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in FAPIIS (see 41 U.S.C. 2313) and accessible through SAM.gov. If an Applicant is currently in FAPIIS, they can comment on any information about its organization that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in FAPIIS, 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 2 CFR §200.205 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: The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases 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 Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
U.S. Department of State
SA-4E (Bldg. 3)
2430 E Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20037

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.9. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and Freedom and Democracy Guidelines: Pursuant to ECA's authorizing legislation, "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic origin, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity, equity, and inclusion 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. Proposals 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 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" 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, and Inclusion" section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating DEI 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," the Bureau "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 Monitoring and Evaluation: Please note: ECA plans to add standardized indicators and corresponding data collection questions for performance monitoring during the period of performance of this award. Therefore, proposed performance monitoring plans and data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established. Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. ECA recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. ECA expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project's objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame), the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.

3. **Participant behavior**, such as concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
4. **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

Please note: Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to ECA in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to ECA upon request.

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. Proposals should demonstrate the organization's capacity to provide innovative options for virtual activities to substitute for in-person engagement for program participants. Organizations should consider how they will implement virtual exchange activities, given the potential limits to internet access from participants in some locations and while continuing to advance foreign policy objectives and achieve lasting benefits for U.S. citizens and international participants.

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 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 budget, and a budget narrative. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

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. Non-Competitive Continuations: Pending successful performance and the availability of funds this award will utilize non-competitive continuations as discussed above.

D.16.a. For competitions that will exercise a non-competitive continuation applicants must submit:

- The SF-424A which must include the budget request amount for the base-year of the program.
- 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 non-competitive continuation years, pending successful program performance and the availability of funds.
- An abbreviated/estimated summary budget presenting the total projected costs for the anticipated total duration of programming (base year, plus two non-competitive continuation years).

D.16.b. To exercise the non-competitive continuation mechanism the recipient will be required to submit:

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

D.16.c. For awards using non-competitive continuations, 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 non-competitive continuations. (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 evaluate all quarterly or semi-annual program and financial reports;
   - All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up-to-date before ECA will exercise additional non-competitive continuations.
   - 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.
   - The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will review and advise of ECA's approval or disapproval of the response before issuing subsequent non-competitive continuations.

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:

- A brief narrative as to why funds remain unobligated and how the unobligated funds will be used to complete the previously approved goals and objectives of the program; and,

- 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: Monday, April 18, 2022
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 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, such as dial-up connections, 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:
ECA will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and ECA regulations and guidelines and forwarded to ECA grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the ECA's Grants Officer.

E.1. Review Criteria: Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed 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 Plan and Ability to Achieve Program Objectives: Proposals should exhibit originality and clearly demonstrate how the program will meet the objectives laid out in this solicitation. A detailed staff work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Activities should be reasonable, feasible, and form a coherent and substantive program for participant exploration of the topic. Competitive proposals will clearly promote ECA's mission to foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries to promote friendly and peaceful relations.

2. Support of Diversity Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): Proposals should show substantive support of ECA's policy on Diversity, which is included as an attachment to the PSI document. Proposals should demonstrate how DEI will be achieved in different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation, including individual participant recruitment, selection and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated DEI plan and not simply express general support for the concept of DEI. Proposals should demonstrate how DEI 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.

3. Project Evaluation: Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. ECA recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use

to link outcomes to original project objectives. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.

4. Cost-effectiveness/Cost-sharing: The overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

5. Institutional Track Record/Ability: Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs (past exchange programs need not have been ECA-funded). ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past ECA awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by ECA Grants staff. ECA will consider the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be fully qualified to achieve the project's goals.

6. Follow-On Activities: Proposals should discuss provisions made for follow-up with returned participants as a means of establishing longer-term individual and institutional linkages. Proposals also should provide a plan for continued follow-on activities (without ECA support), ensuring that ECA supported programs are not isolated events. Please refer to the POGI for additional information on follow-on activities.

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 ECA's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer 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: Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following: 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 (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars).

For a copy of the OMB Guidance cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb
https://www.state.gov/m/a/ope/index.htm

F.3. Reporting Requirements: You must 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 year; 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 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 Non-Competitive Continuations (NCC), 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 provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to ECA in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.10. Program Monitoring and Evaluation 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: Program Officers Christina Dinh and Jose Marrero, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Academic Exchange Programs, ECA/A/E/USS**,** SA-5**,** 4th Floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 340-3699 and (202) 676-7945; DinhCB@state.gov and MarreroJA@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 Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards will be subject to periodic programmatic and financial reporting and evaluation requirements as outlined in the NOFO.

Lee Satterfield February 16, 2022
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State