Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY2023 BridgeUSA Journalism and Rule of Law Scholarship Program
Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0009210
Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.451
Key Date/Application Deadline: November 28, 2022

Executive Summary: The Office of Private Sector Exchange (BridgeUSA) of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for the administration of the BridgeUSA Journalism and Rule of Law Scholarship (JROL) Program. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to provide 20 exchange visitors from select European countries with scholarships in the Intern, Trainee, and Specialist program categories of the Exchange Visitor Program. The program will be administered over 36 months from the date the award is made. The award recipient will recruit and select exchange visitors from marginalized populations (social, political, and economic) in Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. BridgeUSA JROL scholarship selection should ensure that at least five countries are represented among the exchange visitors and ensure a balance of exchange visitors with any of the following academic or professional backgrounds: media and communications, governance and rule of law, or public administration and policymaking. Exchange visitors may come from any of these three backgrounds but should be able to demonstrate a clear nexus to journalism and/or rule of law in their intern/trainee/specialist exchange program. The scholarships would be used to cover exchange visitors' program fees, including placement at a U.S.-based host organization, health benefits coverage, visa fees, SEVIS fees, and airfare. The award recipient shall oversee all aspects of the BridgeUSA JROL Scholarship Program including, but not limited to, recruitment, screening and selection of candidates, distribution of scholarship funds to exchange visitors, placement of exchange visitors with pre-selected host organizations, providing pre-arrival and in-country orientations, monitoring of exchange visitors, and evaluation of program the effectiveness.

The award recipient shall abide by the rules and regulations governing the Exchange Visitor Program as stipulated at 22 CFR Part 62. Exchange visitors may receive stipends/ wages from their placement host organizations. Exchange visitors are not to be compensated through grant/award funds. The award recipient must either be a designated J-1 sponsor or, if not currently designated, must identify a designated J-1 sponsor as a subaward recipient, and must include a Letter of Commitment from the chosen sub-award recipient.

The BridgeUSA JROL Scholarship Program award recipient will have the primary oversight responsibility for recruitment and selection of a diverse group of exchange visitors from the following BridgeUSA program categories: Intern, Trainee, Specialist. The award recipient will work in partnership with BridgeUSA to coordinate the administration of the exchange

program, as outlined in 22 CFR Part 62 Exchange Visitor Program regulations (Subpart A and Subpart B), support networking and alumni activities for exchange visitors, and develop a robust evaluation system to measure program effectiveness (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-22/part-62). This will include developing program marketing and recruitment resources, administering pre-arrival and in-country orientations, drafting, and overseeing training plans for interns and trainees (Form DS-7002), and managing all other program-related activities. Additionally, the award recipient will launch and facilitate, for the duration of this award, a BridgeUSA JROL Scholarship Program social media site (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook) for exchange visitors and alumni. The social media platform will be used for current exchange visitors and alumni to share experiences, exchange ideas, and stay connected beyond the end of the program. The award recipient will work with BridgeUSA to connect exchange visitors and alumni with ECA's International Exchange Alumni network.

Scholarship recipients may be subject to 212(e) 2-year home residency requirement. More information on this requirement can be found at www.travel.state.gov.

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.

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.

Purpose: In order to enhance the U.S. Department of State's engagement with BridgeUSA exchange visitors in support of U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' (ECA), Private Sector Exchange Directorate (BridgeUSA), will issue a cooperative agreement for $100,000, pending the availability of funds, to implement the BridgeUSA JROL Scholarship Program over 36 months. One of the most effective ways to combat disinformation about the United States and democracy is to provide people with a new cognitive framework for seeing the United States and understanding democracy --- and that can only happen via first-hand experience. This is an opportunity for foreign university students and professionals to travel to the United States for longer periods of time so they can better understand the United States and Americans. The JROL Scholarship Program is a unique

opportunity where students and professionals can experience first-hand American culture and traditions. BridgeUSA JROL exchange visitors will collaborate with Americans on various topics including to counter regional instability, transnational crime, and violence that threaten U.S. interests by strengthening citizen-responsive governance, security, democracy, and the rule of law.

Background: BridgeUSA facilitates educational and cultural exchange programs for approximately 300,000 exchange visitors who come to the United States each year to participate in 13 different program categories. BridgeUSA designates and monitors approximately 1,500 "sponsor organizations" that recruit, place, and monitor "exchange visitors" from more than 200 countries and territories. Through people-to-people exchanges, BridgeUSA supports the Department's foreign policy objectives and strategic priorities, e.g., creating resilient communities, addressing disinformation by supporting civil society, open transparent institutions, global health, climate change, diversity and inclusion, and human rights. Since 2006, over four million exchange visitors have participated in BridgeUSA programs. BridgeUSA exchange visitors who experience successful BridgeUSA programs become "citizen ambassadors" who share their new understanding of American values with their friends and family upon return home. In partnership with designated sponsors, BridgeUSA recognizes that the foundation of successful exchanges is ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of all program participants. Other factors that contribute to successful experiences include safe and secure housing and transportation; integration into the community/workplace; and acquisition of new skills, including improved English language proficiency. The Department and program sponsors continuously seek ways to improve all programmatic components to ensure the development of a large cadre of program alumni who serve as lifelong citizen ambassadors.

This cooperative agreement seeks to further expand BridgeUSA's support for the Department of State's foreign policy priorities that focus on supporting democratic governance and respect for individual liberty through tolerance, preserving and strengthening Western democratic principles, increasing Euro-Atlantic integration, and reducing vulnerability to malign influence. The BridgeUSA JROL Scholarship Program will build professional expertise and strengthen connections among a diverse group of emerging European leaders. The program will emphasize the United States' commitment to core democratic values that bind the Transatlantic alliance together and create stable, inclusive societies, that are less vulnerable to malign actors. These values promote tolerance, an independent judiciary, freedom of speech, an open and pluralistic media environment, free and fair democratic elections, and protection of the rule of law.

Goals: BridgeUSA programs enable foreign nationals to come to the United States to teach, study, conduct research, demonstrate special skills, or receive on the job training for periods ranging from a few weeks to several years. BridgeUSA's mission – to increase mutual understanding between Americans and people of other countries – remains vital to U.S. national security and building people-to-people connections around the world. Through the JROL Scholarship Program, BridgeUSA aims to:

1. Promote mutual understanding and lasting partnerships between emerging leaders from foreign countries and the United States;
2. Provide opportunities for BridgeUSA program exchange visitors to collaborate and share ideas, approaches, and strategies to develop solutions to pressing local and global challenges;
3. Increase Americans' global competitiveness through new and expanded partnerships with BridgeUSA alumni professionals from around the world;
4. Create resilient communities and address disinformation by supporting civil society, open transparent institutions, global health, climate change, diversity and inclusion, and human rights; and
5. Build a global network of like-minded professionals committed to creating positive change in their workplaces and communities.

In close coordination with the Private Sector Exchange Directorate, the award recipient should be prepared to administer the BridgeUSA JROL Scholarship Program in accordance with 22 CFR Part 62 Exchange Visitor Program regulations, and as specified in the cooperative agreement, including but not limited to recruitment, screening and selection of candidates, distribution of scholarship funds to exchange visitors, placement of exchange visitors with pre-selected host organizations, providing pre-arrival and in-country orientations, monitoring of program exchange visitors, and evaluation of program the effectiveness.

BridgeUSA JROL Program Administration and Implementation

The BridgeUSA JROL Scholarship Program will facilitate exchanges for foreign university students and professionals in the Intern, Trainee, and Specialist categories. Exchange visitors would qualify through their field of study or profession. For example, an exchange visitor in the Intern category might be a law or journalism student, while a Trainee or Specialist might be a professional in the fields of law or journalism.

The proposal should describe in detail the proposed activities for the JROL program including how the program will:

i) Enhance skills management, technical, and thematic training in the fields of law, and information media and communications;
ii) Improve the presenting, writing, and/or translation skills of exchange visitors for broadcasting to foreign audiences;
iii) Enable recent law graduates to gain experience with the U.S. legal system;
iv) Improve exchange visitors' understanding of U.S. law and court proceeding, e.g., through attending public court hearings and/or conducting research on U.S. court systems;
v) Expose exchange visitors to the latest methods in technology and practical journalism skills that will enhance the broadcasting quality at their local stations;
vi) Train foreign exchange visitors on the latest management and advertising practices that will help them improve the financial viability of their organizations upon return;

vii) Facilitate networking for exchange visitors with U.S. organizations outside their host organizations (for example, other media companies and tech platforms);

viii) Ensure that host organizations support exchange visitors in practical skill building such as writing stories, conducting research, and/or contributing to open-source media platforms.

Exchange visitors under the Intern and Trainee J-1 categories will require a Training Plan (Form DS-7002) be created in SEVIS. For this program, duration of participation shall be no less than 6 months and no more than 12 months. Programs should be individualized to meet the needs of the individual intern or trainee. Cross-cultural activities for exchange visitors must be included in the proposal. Example could include i) tours of newspaper publishers/ online media platforms, ii) opportunities to observe the U.S. voting process, iii) opportunities to visit an active courtroom session, iv) opportunities to engage with campus newspaper or broadcast students and staff.

The BridgeUSA JROL Scholarship Program award recipient, in coordination with participating U.S. embassies and ECA, will be responsible for but not limited to recruitment, screening and selection of candidates, distribution of scholarship funds to exchange visitors, placement of exchange visitors with pre-selected host organizations, providing pre-arrival and in-country orientations, monitoring of program exchange visitors, and evaluation of program the effectiveness.

BridgeUSA Program Recipient Evaluations. To ensure the quality of training and internship programs, sponsors must develop procedures for evaluating all exchange visitors. Formal evaluations are required for trainees and interns per the regulations laid out in 22 CFR Part 62, but the award recipient should also implement a system to evaluate specialists to ensure that program objectives are met. All required evaluations must be completed prior to the conclusion of a training and internship program, and both the trainees and interns and their immediate supervisors must sign the evaluation forms. For programs exceeding six months' duration, at a minimum, midpoint and concluding evaluations are required. For programs of six months or less, at a minimum, concluding evaluations are required. Sponsors must retain trainee and intern evaluations (electronic or hard copy) for a period of at least three years following the completion of each training and internship program.

Issuance of certificate of eligibility for exchange visitor (J-1) status. Sponsors must not deliver or cause to be delivered any Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status (Form DS-2019) to potential trainees or interns unless the individualized Form DS-7002 required by § 62.22(i) has been completed and signed by all requisite parties.

Additional training and internship program participation. Foreign nationals who enter the United States under the Exchange Visitor Program to participate in training and internship programs are eligible to participate in additional training and internship programs under certain conditions. For both trainees and interns, additional training and internship programs must

address the development of more advanced skills or a different field of expertise. Interns may apply for additional internship programs if they:
1) Are currently enrolled full-time and pursuing studies at degree- or certificate-granting post-secondary academic institutions outside the United States; or,
2) Have graduated from such institutions no more than 12 months prior to the start of their proposed exchange visitor program. A new internship is also permissible when a student has successfully completed a recognized course of study (*i.e.*, associate, bachelors, masters, Ph.D., or their recognized equivalents) and has enrolled and is pursuing studies at the next higher level of academic study. Trainees are eligible for additional training programs after a period of at least two years residency outside the United States following completion of their training program. Exchange visitors who have successfully completed internship programs and no longer meet the selection criteria for an internship program may participate in a training program if they have resided outside the United States or its territories for at least two years. If exchange visitors meet these selection criteria and fulfill these conditions, there will be no limit to the number of times they may participate in a training and internship program.

Prior to departing for the U.S., all exchange visitors are required to have a pre-departure orientation and be enrolled in compliant health and accident coverage. Upon completion of their programs, exchange visitors shall be required to return to their home country and contribute to the goals of their respective host-country organizations, as a condition of accepting Department of State sponsorship. Exchange visitors are supervised by host organization's specific location who have full supervisory authority. Exchange visitors receive direct and/or indirect guidance and supervision from the staff of the award recipient and host organization during their U.S. programs.

Organizational Capacity: Applicant organizations must demonstrate in their proposals their capacity for conducting international educational and cultural exchanges, supporting exchange alumni engagement activities, and providing substantive professional placements for up-and-coming leaders. Applicants should also illustrate in their proposals the breadth of their experience working in international exchange and a record of flexibility and adaptability in programming under short timelines or challenging conditions. Proposals should include concrete examples in which the organization has responded quickly to rapidly evolving circumstances, including, if possible, examples that demonstrate the ability to recruit exchange visitors from a diverse and geographically dispersed community.

Partner Organizations: Applicants should provide examples of organizations with whom they would partner to host organizations. In addition, applicants must demonstrate the breadth of their experience working with exchange visitor students and scholars, including professional development programming, virtual engagement, and the development of Training/Internship Placement Plans (T/IPP) and alumni networks. Applicant organizations must demonstrate the ability to provide appropriate professional host organization placements for a diverse group of exchange visitors.

Guidelines:

The cooperative agreement will begin on or about January 1, 2023. The award period should be approximately 36 months in duration, and cover all aspects of program planning, recruitment, professional development activities, and connecting scholarship program alumni. Applicants should provide a proposed a timeline covering the three years of the award implementation, including recruitment schedule and planning milestones.

ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets, and exchange visitor numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

A.1. Recipient Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

Oversee all aspects of BridgeUSA JROL Scholarship Program including, but not limited to recruitment, screening and selection of candidates, distribution of scholarship funds to exchange visitors, placement of exchange visitors with pre-selected host organizations, providing pre-arrival and in-country orientations, monitoring of program exchange visitors, and evaluation of program the effectiveness.

The obligations for administering training and internship programs are outlined in 22 CFR 62 Part 62.22

Recipient Obligations of training and internship program.
1) Award recipients designated by the Department to administer training and internship programs must:
(i) Ensure that trainees and interns are appropriately selected, placed, oriented, supervised, and evaluated;
(ii) Be available to trainees and interns (and host organizations, as appropriate) to assist as facilitators, counselors, and information resources;
(iii) Ensure that training and internship programs provide a balance between the trainees' and interns' learning opportunities and their contributions to the organizations in which they are placed;
(iv) Ensure that the training and internship programs are full-time (minimum of 32 hours a week); and
(v) Ensure that any host organizations and third parties involved in the recruitment, selection, screening, placement, orientation, evaluation for, or the provision of training and internship programs are sufficiently educated on the goals, objectives, and regulations of the Exchange Visitor Program and adhere to all regulations set forth in this part as well as all additional terms and conditions governing Exchange Visitor Program administration that the Department may from time to time impose.

2) Award recipient must certify that they or any host organization acting on its behalf:
(i) Have sufficient resources, plant, equipment, and trained personnel available to provide the specified training and internship program;

(ii) Provide continuous on-site supervision and mentoring of trainees and interns by experienced and knowledgeable staff;
(iii) Ensure that trainees and interns obtain skills, knowledge, and competencies through structured and guided activities such as classroom training, seminars, rotation through several departments, on-the-job training, attendance at conferences, and similar learning activities, as appropriate in specific circumstances;
(iv) Conduct periodic evaluations of trainees and interns, as set forth in CFR 62.22(l);
(v) Do not displace full- or part-time or temporary or permanent American workers or serve to fill a labor need and ensure that the positions that trainees and interns fill exist primarily to assist trainees and interns in achieving the objectives of their participation in training and internship programs; and

3) Award recipients or any third parties acting on their behalf must complete thorough screening of potential trainees or interns, including a documented interview conducted by the recipient either in-person or by videoconferencing, or by telephone if videoconferencing is not a viable option.

(4) Sponsors must retain all documents referred to in CFR 62.22(f) for at least three years following the completion of all training and internship programs. Documents and any requisite signatures may be retained in either hard copy or electronic format.

Use of third parties -
1) ***Sponsors use of third parties.*** Award recipients may engage third parties (including, but not limited to host organizations, partners, local businesses, governmental entities, academic institutions, and other foreign or domestic agents) to assist them in the conduct of their designated training and internship programs. Such third parties must have an executed written agreement with the sponsor to act on behalf of the sponsor in the conduct of the sponsor's program. This agreement must outline the obligations and full relationship between the sponsor and third party on all matters involving the administration of their exchange visitor program. A sponsor's use of a third party does not relieve the sponsor of its obligations to comply with and to ensure third party compliance with Exchange Visitor Program regulations. Any failure by any third party to comply with the regulations set forth in this part or with any additional terms and conditions governing Exchange Visitor Program administration that the Department may from time to time impose will be imputed to the sponsors engaging such third party.

2) ***Screening and vetting third parties operating outside the United States.*** Sponsors must ascertain that third parties operating outside the United States are legitimate entities within the context of their home country environment. For third parties that operate as businesses, sponsors must obtain relevant home country documentation, such as a business registration or certification. Such home country documentation must include an English Language translation for any business registration or certification documents submitted in a foreign language. Written agreements between sponsors and third parties operating outside the United States must include annually updated price lists for training and internship programs offered by each third party and

must indicate that such overseas third parties are sufficiently trained in all aspects of the programs they represent, including the regulations set forth in this part.

3) ***Screening and vetting host organizations.*** Sponsors must adequately screen all potential host organizations at which a trainee or intern will be placed by obtaining the following information:
(i) Employer Identification Number (EIN) used for tax purposes;
(ii) Third party verification of telephone number, address, and professional activities, e.g., via advertising, brochures, Web site, and/or feedback from prior participants; and
(iii) Verification of Worker's Compensation Insurance Policy or equivalent in each state or, if applicable, evidence of state exemption from requirement of coverage.

4) ***Site visits of host organizations.*** Sponsors must conduct site visits of host organizations that have not previously participated successfully in the sponsor's training and internship programs and that have fewer than 25 employees or less than three million dollars in annual revenue. Placements at academic institutions or at federal, state, or local government offices are specifically excluded from this requirement. The purpose of the site visits is for the sponsors to ensure that host organizations possess and maintain the ability and resources to provide structured and guided work-based learning experiences according to individualized T/IPPs and that host organizations understand and meet their obligations set forth in this part.

Host organization obligations. Sponsors/ Recipients must ensure that:
1) Host organizations sign a completed Form DS-7002 to verify that all placements are appropriate and consistent with the objectives of the trainees or interns as outlined in their program applications and as set forth in their T/IPPs. All parties involved in internship programs should recognize that interns are seeking entry-level training and experience. Accordingly, all placements must be tailored to the skills and experience level of the individual intern;

2) Host organizations notify sponsors promptly of any concerns about, changes in, or deviations from T/IPPs during training and internship programs and contact sponsors immediately in the event of any emergency involving trainees or interns;

3) Host organizations abide by all federal, state, and local occupational health and safety laws;

4) Host organizations abide by all program rules and regulations set forth by the sponsors, including the completion of all mandatory program evaluations.

Training/internship placement plan (Form DS-7002).
1) Sponsors/Recipients must fully complete and obtain all requisite signatures on a Form DS-7002 for each trainee or intern before issuing a Form DS-2019. Sponsors must provide each signatory an executed copy of the Form DS-7002. Upon request, trainees and interns must present their fully executed Form DS-7002 to Consular Officials during their visa interview.

2) To further distinguish between *bona fide* training for trainees or work-based learning for interns, which are permitted, and unskilled or casual labor positions which are not, all T/IPPs must:
(i) State the specific goals and objectives of the training and internship program (for each phase or component, if applicable);
(ii) Detail the knowledge, skills, or techniques to be imparted to the trainee or intern (for each phase or component, if applicable); and
(iii) Describe the methods of performance evaluation and the supervision for each phase or component, if applicable.

3) A T/IPP for trainees must be divided into specific and various phases or components, and for each phase or component must:
(i) Describe the methodology of training and
(ii) Provide a chronology or syllabus.

4) A T/IPP for interns must:
(i) Describe the role of the intern in the organization and, if applicable, identify various departments or functional areas in which the intern will work; and
(ii) Identify the specific tasks and activities the intern will complete.

Program exclusions. Sponsors designated by the Department to administer training and internship programs must not:

1) Place trainees or interns in unskilled or casual labor positions, in positions that require or involve child care or elder care; or in clinical or any other kind of work that involves patient care or patient contact, including any work that would require trainees or interns to provide therapy, medication, or other clinical or medical care (e.g., sports or physical therapy, psychological counseling, nursing, dentistry, veterinary medicine, social work, speech therapy, early childhood education);

2) Place trainees or interns in positions, occupations, or businesses that could bring the Exchange Visitor Program or the Department into notoriety or disrepute; or

3) Engage or otherwise cooperate or contract with a Staffing/Employment Agency to recruit, screen, orient, place, evaluate, or train trainees or interns, or in any other way involve such agencies in an Exchange Visitor Program training and internship program.

4) Issue a T/IPP for any trainee or intern for which the duties involve more than 20 per cent clerical work.

Recruitment, Selection, and Placement:

1. Establish a system for receiving candidate applications or nominations, review each application for technical eligibility, and manage review of each candidate for medical clearance, while ensuring protection of exchange visitors' personally identifiable

information;
2. Create and maintain an up-to-date file on each selected exchange visitor;
3. Follow up with participating U.S. embassies regarding applications, documents, and visa appointments, and respond to their inquiries, copying the appropriate program officer in BridgeUSA;
4. Review candidate applications and determine the best organization or college placement for each exchange visitor that will meet his/her academic and professional goals;
5. Ensure that final placements establish diverse cohorts of exchange visitors at each host organization;
6. Obtain approval of the relevant U.S. embassy Public Affairs Section and BridgeUSA program office on final candidate lists.

Pre-departure Support and Programming:

1. Prepare and distribute pre-departure materials for U.S. Embassies or local partners to use during their in-country pre-departure orientations and coordinate virtual participation of consortia and ECA representatives in these events;
2. Prepare pre-departure materials for individual exchange visitors that describe program components, participation expectations, and preparation guidelines, and oversee the dissemination of these materials to exchange visitors through U.S. Embassies or in-country partners;
3. Ensure that each exchange visitor signs a Terms and Conditions document (approved by ECA) and completes all other participation requirements and necessary pre-travel paperwork;
4. Prepare and send Forms DS-2019 and DS-7002 as soon as possible after placement to facilitate the visa application and adjudication process and at least 60 days before departure;
5. Notify the U.S. Embassies of each candidate's proposed U.S. arrival date and the date for sending travel itineraries for each exchange visitor;
6. Arrange round-trip travel for the exchange visitors from their home cities to their U.S. host institutions that is compliant with the Fly America Act and send this itinerary along with general travel information to each exchange visitor and the respective U.S. Embassy;
7. Coordinate pre-departure communication between award recipient and individual exchange visitors with pre-existing physical or mental health needs to facilitate pre-departure preparations and appropriate accommodations, as needed

Program Planning and Participant Monitoring

1. Assist with housing arrangements for each exchange visitor in conjunction with host organizations and share rules and regulations for housing with exchange visitors;
2. Ensure that each exchange visitor receives an orientation upon arrival in the United States;

3. Enroll exchange visitors in the Bureau's ASPE health benefits plan or alternative plan that meets J-1 visa requirements and is approved by ECA, advise exchange visitors about the benefits plan, and assist with claims as necessary;
4. Monitor exchange visitors' adjustment, health and well-being, and program performance. Oversee the coordination and implementation of health and safety protocols and procedures between all individual host campuses and the administrative partner. Manage exchange visitor issues and emergencies at all times in coordination with the Bureau's program office, and submit exchange visitor incident report forms, as needed, based on ECA policy guidelines;
5. Develop and facilitate programming that will increase exchange visitors' employability skills and assist them in applying for, obtaining, and participating in a professional training or continuing education directly related to the exchange visitors' professional background;
6. Plan and implement at least one BridgeUSA JROL-program cultural exchange event that facilitates exchange visitors' personal and professional development and helps exchange visitors maximize their BridgeUSA experiences;
7. Assist exchange visitors in preparing for re-entry and their transitions upon return home;
8. Manage and monitor the J-1 visa duration and SEVIS status of the exchange visitors;
9. Manage financial aspects of the program where applicable including accident and sickness benefits, host university agreements, taxes, and other activity costs;
10. Assume overall responsibility for complying with all applicable tax treaties and federal, state, and local laws on tax withholding and reporting for exchange visitors;

Alumni Programming and Ongoing Engagement

1. Track and maintain updated lists of alumni and facilitate follow-on activities with alumni after they return home; and
2. Plan and coordinate activities that would create opportunities for BridgeUSA JROL-wide alumni engagement and amplify host organization alumni engagement efforts to strengthen both the program-specific brand and the BridgeUSA alumni network.

Additional Information:

All materials, publicity, and correspondence related to the program will acknowledge this as a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. The Bureau will retain copyright use of and be allowed to distribute materials related to this program as it sees fit.

Support of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). A description on how the Bureau's policy on Support of Diversity will be integrated into all aspects of the seminar, including but not limited to program materials and training methodology. Please refer to guidance in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) and under section D.9. "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and Freedom and Democracy Guidelines."

Budget. Please refer to section D.13.a. in this document for allowable costs and the PSI for guidance on formatting your budget.

Acknowledging ECA's Financial Support. An acknowledgment to follow guidance in the PSI entitled "Acknowledgment of ECA's Financial Support and Use of the Department Seal." Proposals should also indicate agreement to use the "BridgeUSA" logo in all relevant program materials, applications, websites, and other related materials.

Resumes. Resumes of principal staff of all partner organizations involved in the implementation of the project should be included. Resumes should be no more than two pages in length.

Letters of Commitment and/or Letters of Support. Letters of commitment or support from partner organizations/partner institutions that demonstrate a capacity to arrange and conduct U.S. and overseas activities should also be included.

Project Materials. Materials that help demonstrate program design and implementation should be included. These include:

1) Sample implementation schedule
2) Sample internship/ training plan
3) Sample evaluation and survey materials
4) List of potential in-country partners
5) Sample social media plan
6) Draft promotional and sample application materials

Unsolicited Documents. Attachments that do not directly address the proposed project (i.e., organization brochures, pamphlets, unsolicited reports) are strongly discouraged.

A.2. Substantial Involvement:

Please note:

In a cooperative agreement, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine grant monitoring. BridgeUSA's activities and responsibilities for the BridgeUSA JROL Program are as follows:

1) Seek relevant U.S. Embassy approval of scholarship exchange visitors and host organizations/ institutions
2) Assist with connecting scholarship program alumni with relevant U.S. Embassy Alumni Network.
3) Reviewing and approving of all program publicity and other material; approving of program timelines and agendas;
4) Assisting with all participant emergencies;
5) Liaising with relevant U.S. embassies and country desk officers at the U.S.; Department of State, specifically in terms of recruitment and selection efforts;
6) Assisting in arrangements for the debriefing session with Department of State and Public Affairs Sections (PASs) at U.S. embassies/consulates overseas;

7) Coordinating with the award recipient to publicize the program through various media outlets and social media platforms of ECA and Public Affairs Sections (PASs) at U.S. embassies/consulates overseas.

B. Federal Award Information

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A1. Substantial Involvement under A. Program Description.
Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2023
Approximate Total Funding: $100,000, pending the availability of FY 2023 funds.
Approximate Number of Awards: One.
Approximate Average Award: $100,000, pending the availability of FY 2023 funds.
Minimum "Floor" of Award: $100,000, pending the availability of FY 2023 funds.
Maximum "Ceiling" of Award: $100,000, pending the availability of FY 2023 funds.
Anticipated Award Date: January 1, 2023, pending the availability of FY 2023 funds.
Anticipated Project Completion Date: January 1, 2026.
Additional Information:

The Department reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program 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) All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, POGI (if applicable), and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI); non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

b) For this 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.

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.2. Eligible Countries and Themes: Under this NOFO, a single award will be issued for the following countries: **Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia,** and **Ukraine.** 20 exchange visitors must be selected from across the region, with at least five countries represented among the exchange visitors. Proposals must address only the combination of eligible J1 categories and themes listed below. ECA reserves the right to add or remove eligible countries and/or regions prior to the issuance of the award.

The BridgeUSA award recipient will have the primary responsibility for recruitment and selection of a diverse group of exchange visitors under the Trainee, Intern, and Specialist categories. BridgeUSA JROL scholarship selection should seek a balance of exchange visitors across the following academic or professional backgrounds. Exchange visitors may come from any of these three backgrounds but should be able to demonstrate a clear nexus to journalism and/or rule of law in their intern/trainee/specialist exchange program:

1. **Media and Communications:** Scholarships should support students studying and/or professionals involved in print and broadcast media and journalism; social or transmedia; press relations; public relations; public affairs; and communications. Proposals submitted under this theme might include an emphasis on freedom of the press; ethical journalism, countering disinformation and misinformation; audience engagement, media entrepreneurship, creating compelling narratives and storytelling; and new trends in digital media and communications.

2. **Governance and Rule of Law:** Scholarships should support students studying and/or professionals involved in the judicial sector with an emphasis on rule of law and legislative process; law and judicial reform; human rights and access to justice; civil liberties, anti-corruption; transparency and accountability governance.

3. **Public administration and policy making**: Scholarships should support students studying and/or professionals involved in public administration and policy making political campaigns; conflict mitigation and peacebuilding; human rights and access to justice; inclusive and sustainable development; relationship between the public sector and broader society.

Exchange Visitor Program J-1 category Eligible Program Descriptions:

Intern: This category is for exchange visitors in a structured guided work-based internship program in his or her specific academic field and who either is currently enrolled fulltime in and actively pursuing studies at a foreign ministerial-recognized degree or certificate-granted post-secondary academic institution outside the United States or graduated from such an institution no more than 12 months prior to the exchange visitor program begin date reflected on Form DS-2019. In addition, a specific objective of the new internship program is to provide foreign nationals who are currently enrolled full-time and pursuing studies at a degree- or certificate-granting post-secondary academic institution or graduated from such an institution no more than 12 months prior to their exchange visitor program start date a period of work-based learning to allow them to develop practical skills that will enhance their future careers. Bridging the gap between formal education and practical work experience and gaining substantive cross-cultural experience are major goals in educational institutions around the world. By providing training opportunities for current foreign students and recent foreign graduates at formative stages of their development, the U.S. Government will build partnerships, promote mutual understanding, and develop networks for relationships that will last through generations as these foreign nationals move into leadership roles in a broad range of occupational fields in their own societies. These results are closely tied to the goals, themes, and spirit of the Fulbright-Hays Act. Participation in this category shall not exceed one year.

Trainee: This category is for exchange visitors participating in a structured and guided work-based training program in his or her specific occupational field (in an occupational category for which a sponsor has obtained designation) who has either: 1) a degree or professional certificate from a foreign ministerially-recognized post-secondary academic institution and at least one year of prior related work experience in his or her occupational field acquired outside the United States; or 2) five years of work experience in his or her occupational field acquired outside the United States. Participation in this program is meant to enhance the skills or expertise of the exchange visitor in his or her occupational field at a U.S. business while also allowing the individual to gain exposure to U.S. culture. Trainees cannot work in unskilled or casual labor positions, in positions that require or involve childcare or elder care, or in any kind of position that involves patient care or contact. Participation in this category shall not exceed 18 months.

Specialist: The purpose is to promote the interchange of knowledge and skills among foreign and American specialists who are defined as experts in a field of specialized knowledge or skills, and who visit the United States for the purpose of observing, consulting, or demonstrating their special skills. This category is intended for exchanges with experts in such areas, e.g., mass media communication, environmental science, youth leadership, international educational exchange, museum exhibitions, labor law, public administration, and library science. The exchange of specialists is seen as promoting mutual enrichment and furthering linkages among scientific institutions, government agencies, museums, corporations, libraries, and similar types

of institutions. Such exchanges are primarily non-academic and provide opportunities to increase the exchange of knowledge and ideas between American and foreign specialists. Participation in this category shall not exceed one year.

BridgeUSA JROL Scholarship Program Administration and Implementation:

Pre-departure Information, Advising, and Support
Pre-departure support must be coordinated closely across ECA, U.S. Embassies and host organizations/campuses. Support will include participation in pre-departure orientations, the development of printed and electronic pre-departure materials, access to English-language learning materials, and direct engagement with host organizations prior to departure to assess any needs for individual program accommodations and to ensure readiness for travel and participation in the program. The applicant is encouraged to propose additional virtual or in-country programming between the cooperating partner/host organization and exchange visitors, including with program alumni, to support exchange visitors prior to departure. Programming and materials should be designed for exchange visitors who may be traveling abroad for the first time.

The proposal must demonstrate plans for developing and disseminating BridgeUSA JROL scholarship specific pre-departure orientation materials for exchange visitors and U.S. Embassies in participating countries. The proposal shall also describe plans to participate virtually in home country pre-departure orientations (PDOs) and coordinate participation of ECA in these orientations.

Identification of resources for pre-departure English language learning is encouraged. The proposal shall describe creative ideas to connect exchange visitors with the State Department's English language resources both in-country and online (http://www.americanenglish.state.gov/), as well as with host campus-based resources when available to facilitate language learning prior to arrival.

U.S. Arrival and Pre-program Orientation
A U.S. arrival orientation must be provided for all exchange visitors prior to the start of the program activities year, anticipated in summer 2023. Programs shall be no less than 80 hours of orientation and arrival content over a span of no more than three weeks. Applicant organizations must clearly justify the length of time proposed.

The pre-program activities must provide incoming exchange visitors with English language immersion and orientation to U.S. academic and organizational culture to improve their readiness for U.S. higher education system or corporate environment. In addition to building familiarity with the resources available at host organizations, the pre-program preparedness also aims to facilitate success outside of the campus by building skills for success and familiarizing exchange visitors with expectations for behavior and program participation, the rules and regulations of the host organizations, and the laws of the U.S. communities with a focus on navigating topics such as gender and diversity within the U.S. context. The pre-program orientation must also provide

exchange visitors with opportunities for cultural exchange as well as foster a basic understanding of current issues in U.S. society and U.S. social values to foster richer intercultural exchange and engagement with their host communities. Programming should represent the diversity of U.S. society and culture and include a balance of speakers that represent American diversity and offer diverse perspectives and viewpoints.

Exchange visitors must also have opportunities to share their cultures and perspectives with Americans. For example, activities may include exchange visitor presentations about their country or culture to college classes, local schools and community groups, and participation in community programming.

Health, Safety, and Security of Exchange Visitors

Proposals must demonstrate how the program administrator will safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of exchange visitors in the program design and through participant monitoring. Proposals shall also include flexibilities and contingency planning to demonstrate the proposed institutions' ability to respond to needs that may arise during implementation of the program. For example, best practices for responding to local, national, or international events or emergencies, such as the Coronavirus pandemic and/or natural disasters, should be incorporated into planning and implementation for exchange visitors. Proposals should include clear protocols on responding to exchange visitor emergencies.

Alumni Engagement, Follow-On Activities, and Reporting

Alumni activities are an important part of the Bureau's academic exchange programs. Activities ease the returnees' transitions home, strengthen the BridgeUSA alumni network, and will build the BridgeUSA JROL's brand. Alumni programming in the form of professional development activities, virtual programming, blogs, newsletters, and use of social media provides critical program follow-on and maximizes and extends the benefit of the exchange visitors' experiences in the United States. Proposals should outline how host organizations will creatively organize and support alumni activities in close collaboration with ECA and the appropriate U.S. Embassies. Proposals should describe how long-term links with BridgeUSA alumni will be fostered and maintained. Proposals should provide a purposeful plan with an anticipated timeline for continued follow-on BridgeUSA JROL and country-specific alumni engagement using both ECA and BridgeUSA resources and networks and in partnership with the U.S. Embassy. Plans should be designed to be sustainable without continued ECA support.

Alumni tracking is critical for the evaluation of the program and for the implementation of worthwhile follow-on programs. Exchange visitor and alumni data must be transferable to the database maintained at ECA. Alumni impact stories and social media properties must also be transferred to ECA at the end of any award agreement. Recipients are required to collect, maintain, store, and transfer data on exchange visitors/alumni, ensuring personally identifiable information (PII) is protected per Bureau guidelines. Proposals must demonstrate capacity to manage exchange visitor data per Bureau guidelines, respond to Bureau data requests, and maintain or transfer historical records beyond the duration of the cooperative agreement.

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 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.15. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

D.3. Unique Entity Identifier Number

You 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

ECA 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 exchange visitors, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to exchange visitors, monitoring of exchange visitors, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The award recipient will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to exchange visitors 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 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. 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 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," 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 (page vi: https://app.box.com/s/7ms6e5f66kji0h8sgao8uno13drvsg1z) and Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)
- Objective 1: Advance exchange visitor and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
    - Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between exchange visitors and their host communities
        - E1.1.04: Percent of exchange visitors with more favorable opinions of the United States Government
        - E1.1.13: Percent of exchange visitors who are more likely to recommend the United States as a good place to study
        - E1.1.17: Percent exchange visitors with more favorable opinions of the American People
        - E1.1.18: Percent of exchange visitors indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values

        - E1.1.19: Percent of exchange visitors agreeing with statements in support of democratic values
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that exchange visitors and alumni have on their communities / countries
    - Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster exchange visitors' belief that civic engagement benefits communities/countries
        - E2.2.01: Percent of exchange visitors who have more confidence in their ability to have an impact in their home country
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among exchange visitors, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
        - E3.0.02: Percent of foreign exchange visitors who report increasing their network of Americans
        - E3.0.07: Percent of exchange visitors who identify as a Department of State program exchange visitor
    - Sub-Objective 3.1: Alumni subscribe to platforms for resources and information-sharing
        - E3.1.02: Percent of exchange visitors who learned about new resources
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of exchange visitors and beneficiaries
        - E4.0.01: Percent of exchange visitors reporting increases in their job skills as a result of their program participation
        - E4.0.03: Percent of exchange visitors reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of exchange program participation
        - E4.0.05: Percent of exchange visitors who report an increase in technical skills as a result of exchange program participation
    - Sub-Objective 4.1: Exchange visitors engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
        - E4.1.01: Total number of exchange visitors
        - E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts
        - E4.1.04: Number of professional placements
        - E4.1.05: Number of exchange visitors in exchange programs with a media literacy component
    - Sub-Objective 4.2: Increase ability of exchange visitors to recognize and counter disinformation
        - E4.2.01: Percent of exchange visitors that increased ability to counter disinformation
- 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 visitors from or hosted by Minority-Serving Institutions participating in ECA (both funded and private sector) exchanges

- 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 exchange visitor surveys

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://youtu.be/RBUF9pllBwc. 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. (For more information on how to set targets, access this webinar: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUCQbc0I7Nw).
    - 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 exchange visitor 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 exchange visitors 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 exchange visitors/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 exchange visitors – 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. Proposals should demonstrate the organization's capacity to provide innovative options for virtual activities to substitute for in-person engagement for exchange visitors. Organizations should consider how they will implement virtual exchange activities, given the potential limits to internet access from exchange visitors in some locations and while continuing to advance foreign policy objectives and achieve lasting benefits for U.S. citizens and international exchange visitors.

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. 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.

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.13.a. Allowable costs for the program include the following:
1) Travel: International and domestic airfare; airline baggage and seat fees; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs for American participants. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act.

2) Overhead. Costs necessary for the effective administration of the project may include salaries for employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the PSI. Proposals should show strong overhead cost sharing contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner and other sources. Award recipient staff travel should NOT be included in the exchange participant numbers.

3) SEVIS/ I-901 Fees. This is a one-time fee for persons applying for J-1 visas. The fee covers the costs of administering the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (***SEVIS***) and related enforcement efforts. Only principal J-1 applicants must pay the ***SEVIS*** I-901 fee.

4) J-1 Visa Fees. All exchange visitors/applicants must pay the machine-readable visa (MRV) fee to obtain a visa interview appointment.

5) Healthcare Benefits Coverage. Enroll exchange visitors in the Bureau's ASPE health benefits plan or alternative plan that meets J-1 visa requirements and is approved by ECA.
Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

D.14. 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.15. Application Deadline and Method of Submission
Application Deadline Date: Monday, November 28, 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.16. 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.16.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.16.b. How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov
For access to complete instruction on how to apply for NOFOs on Grants.gov, refer to:
https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html

D.16.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.16.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, 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.17. Intergovernmental Review of Applications

Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1. Review Process

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 Bureau 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.2. 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 idea: Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to ECA's mission.

2. Program planning and Ability to achieve program objectives: A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. The agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. The objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.

3. Support of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): Proposals should show substantive support of ECA's policy on Diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how DEI will be achieved in the 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 exchange visitors' experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities.

4. Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability: Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past ECA awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by ECA's Grants Division. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

5. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages. Proposals should include a fully developed performance M&E narrative and a PMP (or similar document) that includes the goals, objectives, and indicators used. Proposals will be evaluated for feasibility and alignment with the M&E section of this solicitation, including if: 1) M&E resources, monitoring mechanisms, and data analysis and reporting procedures are sufficiently detailed and realistic; 2) a realistic learning plan provides a strategy to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices in conjunction with the Grant Officer/GOR; and 3) a PMP (or other

document that includes similar information) is complete, clear, and well-organized. All submitted PMPs and M&E narrative sections will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided information on the minimum data required as per the solicitation.

6. Cost-effectiveness and 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.

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

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

All reports must be submitted in a timely manner. 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**; 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;

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 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.

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Elizabeth Ongao, ongaoe@state.gov and David Benze, benzedb@state.gov, or by phone at 202-676-7895, U.S. Department of State, Private Sector Exchange Directorate, ECA/EC**,** SA-5**,** C2, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037**.**

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 September 26, 2022
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State