

# PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

## FY 2026 American Film Showcase

**Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017868**

### **Office of Citizen Exchanges, Cultural Programs Division**

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued by the Office of Citizen Exchanges, Cultural Programs Division for the FY 2026 American Film Showcase program. Proposals must conform to the solicitation, the guidelines in this document, and the standard Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Any application not adhering to these conditions may be deemed technically ineligible.

These guidelines are **in addition to** the requirements outlined in the solicitation and PSI. In the event of a discrepancy between documents, the solicitation takes precedence.

#### **I. STATEMENT OF WORK**

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) will support the FY 2026 American Film Showcase (AFS), a dynamic and adaptable initiative that combines and harnesses the power of cultural and commercial diplomacy to elevate American creativity as a driver of global influence and economic vitality. By highlighting U.S. leadership in film, television, gaming, and media arts, AFS opens new markets for American creative industries, attracts foreign investment, and reinforces the nation's reputation as a global center for innovation and storytelling.

U.S. embassies play a key collaborative role by identifying and submitting program ideas and nominating participants, allowing AFS to deliver tailored engagements—such as lectures, masterclasses, residencies, screenings, and workshops—led by top industry professionals. This flexible model not only advances the Administration's foreign policy but also strengthens American global business and

creative competitiveness and cultural influence by forging connections between U.S. and international entertainment professionals, creating lasting commercial and professional opportunities for American creatives.

Throughout the program cycle, approximately 60–70 American Experts will lead AFS activities in approximately 30–40 countries. In consultation with regional bureaus, countries will be selected to participate through an application and review process. All countries are eligible to apply.

AFS will produce approximately 35–45 overseas programs, each lasting seven to ten days, featuring lectures, masterclasses, media engagements, screening Q&As, workshops, and other activities that support creative economy and technical development.

Additionally, AFS brings approximately 20–30 international participants to the United States for professional development and engagement with American entertainment industry mentors and representatives.

Under ECA's direction, AFS will curate and showcase relevant American films for U.S. Missions to use in screening programs for overseas audiences, reaching an estimated 600 individuals.

Finally, the FY 2026 AFS award will also include *Made in America: Creative Capital*, a new component designed to further amplify program impact. This initiative will broaden activities by incorporating a commercial diplomacy focus, featuring activities such as business residencies, co-production labs, a Creative IP & Licensing Exchange, creative showcases, export-ready labs, global creative business accelerators, international fellowships, investment forums, and market access and distribution workshops. These activities will help equip an estimated 40-50 U.S. creators to succeed in international markets and forge long-term commercial partnerships. By integrating cultural initiatives with commercial strategy, *Made in America: Creative Capital* positions the United States as the premier destination for creative investment, fueling job creation, innovation, and sustained economic growth. Together, these efforts ensure that American public diplomacy remains agile and effective, advancing national prosperity and global influence through the transformative power of creativity.

It is anticipated that the period of the cooperative agreement will begin approximately **September 1, 2026**, and continue through **December 31, 2028**.

**Recipient Responsibilities:**

The recipient organization will be responsible for the following:

- a. Identify and recommend approximately 60-70 U.S. participants with established expertise and artistic merit in fields such as screenwriting, film financing, funding, distribution, marketing, cinematography, gaming, editing, line producing, music composition, post-production, animation techniques, and other emergent media. ECA retains final approval of all U.S. Experts.
- b. Design in-person programs in partnership with participating U.S. missions, Department of State regional bureaus, and ECA. In-person activities can include workshops, master classes, residencies, and screenings.
- c. Design in-person programs for approximately 20-30 international participants who are film/TV professionals to travel to the United States for engagements with the U.S. entertainment industry, such as attending film festivals, workshops, meetings with industry leaders, and professional networking opportunities.
- d. Develop AFS virtual exchange options to enhance in-person program activities, including virtual platforms for collaboration, film exhibition, discussions and virtual engagement with filmmakers.
- e. Design in-person, virtual, and hybrid follow-on program activities to engage and support alumni through microgrants, professional development opportunities, and networking activities.
- f. Design a plan to form partnerships with U.S. organizations, film festivals, and other relevant partners to expand and amplify the work of AFS.
- g. Design and implement a transparent process to identify, select, and curate films. All selected content should support current U.S. foreign policy priorities. This process should begin early in the program cycle to allow sufficient time for ECA to review and clear all recommended titles. ECA retains final approval of all AFS films and other content.

**1. AFS Preparation**

- a. Obtain filmmaker and film expert participation in the AFS program.
- b. If needed, arrange an orientation (virtual or in person) to provide pre-travel briefings for U.S. Experts. This includes educational materials that

- explain AFS exchange programs, and the role Experts will play and information about the country where Experts will travel.
- c. Prior to individual AFS programs, provide outgoing Experts with relevant program information and pre-departure materials, as well as to solicit Experts for information regarding specific requirements and/or needs (dietary, medical, etc.).
  - d. Arrange all Expert travel, including, but not limited to, assistance with passports, visas, immunizations, and other pre-travel preparations. Purchase Fly America Act compliant round-trip international travel for traveling participants. The award recipient is responsible for making U.S. domestic travel and housing arrangements for all AFS orientation participants. The award recipient is responsible for all travel and housing arrangements and per diems for foreign participants traveling to the United States. All AFS staff travel and per diem is covered by the award recipient.
  - e. Obtain all necessary and appropriate rights and clearances for films to ensure copyright protection and to permit flexibility in programming. This includes obtaining translation rights. All AFS content will need to be cleared for a two-year period to allow for use in follow-on programming and engagement beyond in-country AFS programs.
  - f. Obtain transcripts and dialogue lists for all AFS content to allow for subtitling when needed. When drafting the budget documents, applicant's proposals should allocate funds that cover translation and/or subtitling for up to two films per participating U.S. embassy. U.S. embassies may contribute to subtitling costs, as well.
  - g. Develop a flexible distribution plan for films to accommodate the various formats and technology needs worldwide. This should be done in consultation with participating U.S. missions.
  - h. Ensure the AFS content meets festival criteria, in the event individual titles are submitted for presentation at a U.S. embassy supported festival. Assist with festival entry forms.
  - i. Ship performance and educational materials to U.S. embassies, as needed.
  - j. When necessary, advise U.S. embassies on best practices, including, but not limited to, film screenings, masterclasses, and workshops. Advise on required equipment needs.

- k. Develop program monitoring and evaluation efforts in adherence to the MODE framework requirements to measure the short-term and long-term effects of AFS. This information can be shared through methods including daily reports, final trip reports, blog posts, photographs, social media activity, and video reports.
- l. Work with ECA to facilitate the J1 visa application process. All foreign participants will travel on a U.S. Government designation for the J Exchange Visitor Program. The award recipient must provide the relevant information in a timely fashion, as determined by the general consular timeframe (America visas),
- m. Enroll all participants in ECA's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (APSE) for the period of the exchange. ECA will provide accident and sickness coverage at no cost to the award recipient. Alternatively, participants may use their own plan as long as it offers the same or better coverage, costing no more than \$50 per person, per month. Premiums may be included in the agreement request.

## 2. **AFS Overseas Programs**

- a. In collaboration with ECA and U.S. missions, produce approximately 35-45 programs, with an estimated seven-to-10 days in length. U.S. embassy-supported programs will include activities such as film screenings, film festival support, workshops, masterclasses, lectures, and other educational outreach activities.
- b. Work with ECA and U.S. missions to develop program models for Embassy-sponsored/organized film events.
- c. Coordinate with ECA to ensure U.S. missions and Department of State regional bureaus concur with suitability of selected AFS films for their programming.
- d. Develop ways to document and report on AFS programs in real time through email, photography, social media, and/or video.
- e. When necessary, engage participants through virtual discussions with AFS Experts and develop virtual collaborations throughout the program.

## 3. **AFS International Participant Exchanges**

- a. Design professional exchange opportunities to be part of regular AFS

programs taking place in participating AFS countries or regionally. These exchange activities can focus on a variety of areas, including animation, art design/direction, cinematography, gaming, directing, editing, fundraising, gaming, producing, sound, and writing. These professional development opportunities should allow for deeper follow-on engagement to on-going AFS programs.

- b. Plan and develop exchange opportunities for international participants to travel to the U.S. for professional development activities, including, but not limited to, attending workshops, industry meetings, film festivals, and networking opportunities.
  - c. Plan and develop follow-on programs and initiatives to support AFS alumni, including, alumni summits, networking opportunities, microgrants, professional development programs, and other enhancement opportunities.
  - d. Work with ECA and U.S. missions to finalize all visa arrangements.
  - e. Coordinate travel and other arrangements needed for international participants.
  - f. Arrange orientation for visiting international participants to provide programmatic and logistical information.
  - g. In addition to exchange components, include, when relevant, other cultural exchange activities.
  - h. Provide day-to-day monitoring of the program to prevent and/or manage any issues or complications.
  - i. Document international participants' experiences.
- 4. Made in America: Creative Capital**
- a. In collaboration with ECA and U.S. missions, engage a wide array of entertainment, economic, legal, and policy experts to plan and develop program activities that will involve a whole-of-industry approach to supporting creative, financial, legal, and technical development of film, television, gaming, and other media arts. Activities can include, but are not limited to, creative showcases, investment forums, co-production labs, international fellowships, and other efforts designed to forge lasting partnerships and support the U.S. as the premier destination for creative investment, fueling job creation, innovation, and sustained economic growth.

- b. Virtual and additional online/education opportunities to further share knowledge should be considered. Exchange opportunities should be both in-bound and out-bound.
  - c. Plan and develop follow-on programs and initiatives to support alumni including, networking opportunities, microgrants, professional development programs, and other enhancement and networking opportunities.
  - d. Propose ways to collaborate with private sector partners to expand programmatic reach. Propose ways to work with local, regional and U.S. based partners.
  - e. Work with ECA and relevant U.S. missions to select participating countries.
  - f. Work with ECA and U.S. missions to finalize all visa arrangements,
  - g. Coordinate travel and all other arrangements needed for international participants,
  - h. When relevant, arrange orientation for visiting international participants to provide programmatic and logistical information.
  - i. In addition to exchange components, include, when relevant, community, cultural, social, and civic activities in coordination with each exchange program,
  - j. Provide day-to-day monitoring of the program to prevent and/or manage any issues or complications.
  - k. Document participants' experiences.
5. **Post-Tour Activities**
- a. Report on program activities to ECA immediately following overseas visits, providing summary reports using a format that ECA will provide.
  - b. Assist ECA and U.S. embassies with possible follow-on program development and implementation.
  - c. Provide AFS alumni with guidance to join the ECA alumni network and connect alumni with ECA's Office of Alumni Affairs to learn about available opportunities of support.
6. **AFS Media Strategy**
- a. In close coordination with ECA, develop a comprehensive media and public relations strategy that includes outreach to international and U.S. media. Incorporate social media and innovative technology platforms

into any developed outreach strategy. ECA retains final approval over all media and public relations strategies.

- b. Develop film press kits.
- c. Prepare AFS Experts for all media interviews.
- d. Work with U.S. mission staff for media arrangements and ensure that AFS Experts are briefed on current political and social issues in each country.

### **Substantial Involvement:**

In a cooperative agreement, the Department of State is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. For this opportunity the Department's substantial involvement follows:

1. Participate in the curation process of the AFS film slate, approving final selection of all AFS films.
2. In collaboration with the Recipient, approve final selection of all AFS Experts
3. Identify participating countries and facilitate interaction within the U.S. Department of State to include ECA offices, regional bureaus, and U.S. missions.
4. Arrange in-country media engagements.
5. When possible, arrange participation of U.S. Department of State representatives in pre-tour orientations, any program de-briefings, and sessions related to assessment of program and sub-award recipients.
6. In most cases, U.S. missions will arrange and fund all in-country costs and logistics including, but not limited to, per diems, accommodations, and in-country travel.
7. In most cases, U.S. missions will identify local partners and sites for screenings, workshops, masterclasses, and discussions
8. In most cases, U.S. missions will arrange necessary equipment for program activities including, but not limited to, screening, workshops, and masterclasses.

### **III. PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES**

The award recipient will be responsible for identifying and recommending a collection of films whose filmmakers will be available for overseas travel and programming in response to invitations from participating U.S. missions. Given that all the films and media will be presented abroad as part of ECA's public diplomacy outreach, they should be balanced and be of high artistic merit.

Applicants should keep in mind that AFS is intended to create tangible connections, generate discussions, and share information through workshops.

## Participants

1. **U.S. Participants:** Depending on U.S. mission needs and capacity, two Experts, generally referred to as an AFS filmmaker or an AFS industry expert, will travel to approximately 30-40 ECA selected countries either separately or simultaneously. An AFS filmmaker can be a film's subject/writer/director/producer. Their film is featured as part of an AFS overseas program. An AFS expert is a renowned professional with regional expertise and teaching experience. Depending on the availability of funds and program needs, a third Envoy may travel to an AFS participating country. Additionally, award recipient staff will also travel on selected AFS programs to assist with on-the-ground needs and logistics.

Participating U.S. Experts (filmmakers and industry experts) must be U.S. citizens and residents of the United States and be at least 21 years old; demonstrate high artistic and technical expertise; have a strong interest in international cultural exchange; and be adaptable to unescorted rigorous travel through regions where situations may be difficult.

U.S Experts will be expected to conduct or participate in workshops, masterclasses, lectures, impromptu discussions, virtual discussions, residencies, and other activities with local cultural institutions, schools, filmmakers, and related entities. Furthermore, Experts will be expected to engage in media appearances. Selected Experts should represent the creative excellence and professionalism of American film, television, online, and other content creative communities.

2. **International Participants:** International participants from ECA-designated countries who participate in any U.S. workshop portion of AFS will be nominated and approved by U.S. missions. All foreign participants must be at least 21 years of age and must travel to the United States on a J1 visa.
3. **Overseas Audiences:** U.S. missions will identify program audiences and local partner organizations.
4. **Tour Sites:** U.S. missions will work closely with local partners to identify sites for screenings, workshops, and program activities.

5. **Orientations:** In consultation with ECA, the award recipient will arrange (when required) an orientation and develop materials for AFS participants. Orientation materials/resources should contextualize AFS as a U.S. Department of State initiative, articulating the goals and expectations of the program.
6. **Health Benefits:** Enroll participants in a health benefits plan for the period of the exchange. Participants can be enrolled in ECA's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) with no charge to the cooperative agreement. Alternatively, you may use your own plan as long as it offers the same or better coverage- and costs no more than \$50 per person per month; premiums may be included in the agreement request. Please see <https://www.sevencorners.com/gov/usdos> for more information on coverage. Please refer to the PSI for allowable costs and complete budget guidelines for formatting instructions.
7. **Budget:** ECA anticipates issuing one cooperative agreement for \$1,540,000, pending the availability of funds. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program's needs and the availability of funds. Applicants should include a **Summary Budget** on a separate page before the **Detailed Budget**.

The **Summary Budget** should clearly indicate the number of program participants and provide an overall unit cost per participant. Following the **Detailed Budget**, please include a **Budget Narrative** that concisely explains how costs were calculated and the rationale for including them in the budget.

**Please note:** The Public Affairs Sections of the participating U.S. missions are responsible for film envoy accommodation, per diem abroad, and in-country travel overseas. All AFS staff member travel and costs will be absorbed by the award recipient, not the embassies. The award recipient will be responsible for all foreign participant travel, visa costs for U.S. participants, per diem, and accommodation.

Proposed budgets should include, but are not limited to, the following **allowable expenses**:

1. Participant travel (domestic and international travel for AFS Experts, per the Fly America Act).
2. International travel for program implementation and/or monitoring and

evaluation purposes.

3. Staff travel and insurance.
4. Excess and overweight baggage fees within reason.
5. Visas, immunizations, and vaccines.
6. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and in-program self-quarantine costs, as needed.
7. Airport taxes and applicable country entrance fees.
8. Honoraria, stipends, or allowances should be at a minimum \$300. The honoraria amount limit can be higher to accommodate special circumstances. This will require ECA review and approval.
9. Support for translation and subtitling, pending the availability of funds.
10. Film related costs, such as distribution and duplication.
11. Packing, crating, and shipping of equipment and supplies.
12. Cultural and outreach activities.
13. Food and lodging for AFS orientations.
14. Industry engagement activities, receptions, and other special AFS related events.
15. Outreach, educational, presentation, and website materials (press kits and promotional materials).
16. Trip itinerary booklets.
17. Follow-on activities.
18. Subcontracts and/or subawards.
19. Equipment and resources to support technical aspects of AFS programs.
20. Other justifiable expenses directly related to supporting activities.
21. Overhead costs—ECA urges applicants to keep overhead costs as low and reasonable as possible. Proposals should show strong cost sharing contributions. Costs necessary for the effective administration of the program may include salaries for grantee organization employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the PSI. Cooperative agreement funding amounts for the following are to be reviewed and approved by ECA: books and educational materials allowance for film Experts; conference room rental rates; film Envoy consultant interpreters/group coordinators/escorts fees and honoraria rates; cultural allowance rates per participant; honoraria rates for foreign content creators; per diem-standard government rates. Monitoring and Evaluation costs should not exceed up to five percent of the cooperative agreement.

Organizations are encouraged to cost share any rates that exceeds these amounts.

**Other Notes:** The recipient organization is responsible for all components of the program outlined in the POGI. The organization must also inform the ECA program officer, in a timely fashion, of its progress at each stage of the project's implementation. All materials 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.

### **III. PROPOSAL CONTENTS**

Applicants must submit a complete and thorough proposal that addresses the program's objectives and requirements. Proposals should be clear, concise, and responsive to the criteria outlined in the solicitation and PSI.

Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

**NOTE:** Proposals submitted through Grants.gov may only be submitted in the following formats:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) - 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/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>.
- ASCII Text
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images)

### **IV. OTHER AWARD INFORMATION**

**Adherence To All Regulations Governing The J Visa**

Proposals must demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) Programs as outlined in **22 CFR 62**. For more information, visit <http://j1visa.state.gov>.

#### **V. APPLICATION SUBMISSION**

The solicitation document specifies the deadline and method for proposal submission. **There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this deadline.** For further information regarding this program, call **CATHERINE COLLINS** at **(202) 632-9301**, **ECA/PE/C/CU**; **Fax: (202) 632-9355**; **email: [collinscs@state.gov](mailto:collinscs@state.gov)**.