

PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

FY 2026 Sports Envoy Program

Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0018007

Office of Sports Diplomacy

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued by the Office of Sports Diplomacy for the FY 2026 Sports Envoy 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) is supporting the participation of current and former American professional athletes and coaches overseas as Sports Envoys. These weeklong programs promote cross-cultural understanding, engage key communities that are often difficult to reach through traditional approaches, and showcase American excellence and leadership through sport.

Recipient Responsibilities:

The recipient organization will be responsible for the following, in close consultation with ECA and U.S. embassies, as appropriate:

1. Envoy Recruitment
 - a. Design and manage an Envoy nomination and recruitment system.

- b. Issue invitations to qualified American athletes/coaches and fill 100% of Envoy openings.
 - c. In collaboration with ECA, cultivate relationships with professional athletes to maintain a robust pipeline of qualified Envoys.
 - d. Screen prospective Envoys and assess suitability, availability, and risk considerations.
 - e. Maintain secure records of recruitment, screening, and selection activities.
2. Intake & Coordination
- a. Prepare clear program descriptions based on U.S. embassy input.
 - b. Manage Envoy onboarding, including invitations, timelines, and required documentation.
 - c. Edit and standardize Envoy bios and photos for official use.
 - d. Coordinate and document initial planning calls among Envoys, U.S. embassies, and ECA.
3. Program Preparation
- a. Coordinate international travel (book flights) and logistics in compliance with federal and ECA requirements.
 - b. Coordinate lodging (to be booked by U.S. embassies), visa, vaccination, passport, ASPE health insurance, and any country entry requirements.
 - c. Develop and distribute pre-departure orientation materials.
 - d. Finalize program schedules and materials in collaboration with ECA, U.S. embassies, and Envoys.
 - e. Manage per diem advances and pre-travel communications to ensure Envoy readiness.
4. Program Implementation
- a. Provide real-time program support and duty officer coverage.
 - b. Support approved media and public diplomacy amplification in coordination with ECA and U.S. embassies.
 - c. Manage incident reporting and duty-of-care responsibilities as required.

5. Post-Program Activities

- a. Conduct debriefs with Envoys and U.S. embassies and collect required data.
- b. Process final payments, reimbursements, and honoraria.
- c. Maintain alumni records, media archives, and program cost tracking.
- d. Produce concise program highlights aligned with U.S. foreign policy and America First objectives.
- e. Ensure required data entry and documentation (e.g., CERC, cables, media).

6. Alumni Engagement

- a. Administer alumni grant programs, including outreach, review, award management, and reporting.
- b. Coordinate alumni virtual engagements with U.S. embassies and process honoraria.
- c. Disseminate Alumni Affairs funding and engagement opportunities throughout the year.
- d. Support alumni community-building through convenings and professional development activities.
- e. Support ECA manage target of opportunities and on-demand requests.

7. Storytelling & Impact

- a. Implement a strategic communications and storytelling approach highlighting program goals and outcomes.
- b. Capture Envoy testimonials (including video testimonials) and develop qualitative and quantitative success stories.
- c. In collaboration with ECA, develop practical sports diplomacy resources for U.S. embassies.

8. Technology, Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning

- a. Design and implement a data management system to securely track and store accurate programmatic quantitative data (e.g., participant numbers by country) and qualitative data (e.g., recorded participant quotes, alumni grant success stories) for the creation of engaging and accessible reports, highlights, and program reviews with ECA. The

internal system should automate communication with Envoys and track invitation decisions. Proposal should demonstrate staff capacity to manage this type of system and applicants are encouraged to consider use of AI to strengthen implementation systems. Proposals should attach examples of prior work in this area.

- b. Design and implement a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) that outlines plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions, as outlined in the Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation section of the NOFO.
- c. Design and maintain engaging and high-quality program website.
- d. Track and report on specific program and budget metrics including: program costs, current financials and projected spend plan based on future programming, success stories, and relevant media.
- e. Ensure surveys or interviews are conducted and shared with ECA for purposes of monitoring and program improvement.

9. Administrative & Compliance

- a. Provide programmatic and administrative oversight of the programs.
- b. Manage all financial aspects of the program, including stipend disbursements to the participants, as applicable.
- c. Prepare necessary educational and promotional materials that support the program. 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. All ECA Award 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. Collaborate with ECA and current implementing partner on transfer of program data, databases, websites, and other relevant information for the seamless transfer of program and administrative responsibilities.
- e. Provide timely regular progress reports to ECA and comply with financial and program reporting requirements.
- f. Participate in regular program reviews with the ECA to assess program

implementation.

- g. Prepare and share program and/or alumni highlights and success stories in a timely fashion with the ECA.
- h. Submit proposed changes to staffing plans and/or key personnel to the ECA Program and Grants Officers for approval.
- i. Respond fully and promptly to requests for program information from the ECA.
- j. Secure professional photography for key portions of each exchange and upload photos to an online platform accessible to ECA and U.S. embassies.

Substantial Involvement:

In a cooperative agreement, the Department of State is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. See Department of State responsibilities in the NOFO.

II. PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

See Program Specific Guidelines section in the NOFO.

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)

Narrative:

Applicants must submit a detailed narrative proposal, not to exceed 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages (with one-inch margins, size 12 font), addressing the following areas. The narrative should not only describe major program activities but also explain and justify any programmatic choices, demonstrating alignment with the objectives of the Sports Envoy Program.

1. Vision (Statement of Need, Objectives, Goals, Benefits)

Describe the project objectives and desired outcomes, including the knowledge, skills, and/or attitudinal changes that participants will acquire. Proposals should be original, well-defined, and relevant to ECA's mission. Clearly articulate the need for the program, its goals, and anticipated benefits for participants and their communities. Include innovative programming ideas responsive to ECA priorities, including Freedom 250 and the Decade of Sport in America mega-sporting events.

2. Program Activities and Implementation

Provide a detailed description of major program activities, including program preparation, implementation support, and post-program activities. Explain how these activities support the program's America First objectives and follow the program guidelines described in the NOFO. Address how you will manage the logistical complexities of international travel, last-minute itinerary changes, and coordination with U.S. embassies. Describe your approach to Envoy recruitment, including how you will leverage existing networks and cultivate new relationships to maintain a robust pipeline of qualified Envoys. Explain your screening process for assessing Envoy suitability, availability, and risk considerations. Detail how you will fill Envoy openings and manage the nomination and recruitment system.

3. Institutional Capacity and Project Management

Demonstrate your organizational capacity to conduct programs of this nature, focusing on three areas of competency: provision of sport-based programs and coordination with professional athletes/coaches, international exchange program management and complex travel coordination, and key personnel. Detail your

experience booking and monitoring international flights and coordinating with U.S. professional sports leagues, federations, and high-profile athletes and coaches. Describe program staffing (individuals by name and responsibilities), qualifications, structure, and resources. Include this information for partner organizations as applicable. Demonstrate your expertise in exchange programs and internal controls for managing federal funds.

4. Follow-on Activities and Multiplier Effect

Describe your plan for supporting, implementing, and monitoring follow-on activities, including management of alumni grants, virtual engagements, and support for alumni community-building. Include strategies for engaging alumni from previous or other ECA-funded exchange programs. Provide a plan for continued follow-on activities that ensures programs are not isolated events.

5. Media and Communication Strategy

Provide a robust media and communication plan to promote the program, highlight participant experiences, and leverage the narrative power of sports. Detail how you will amplify program impact through various media formats.

6. Technology and Data Management

Describe your organization's capacity to design, implement, and maintain a comprehensive data management system with automated communication systems, real-time data tracking and reporting capabilities, and secure information management protocols that support program implementation and alumni engagement. Include examples of prior work in this area as an appendix.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Describe the plan for performance monitoring and evaluation, including methodologies for assessing the achievement of program objectives and outcomes. Reference the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation section of the NOFO for more information.

8. Work Plan, Schedule, and Cost-Effectiveness

Outline the phases of project planning and implementation for the entire award period. Provide a detailed work plan and timeline showing key milestones and deliverables that demonstrates your institution's ability to carry out the program. Explain how your program design minimizes overhead costs while ensuring all

costs are necessary and appropriate. Demonstrate efficient use of ECA funds and detail any cost-sharing contributions.

IV. OTHER AWARD INFORMATION

For Informational Purposes Only - 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.**

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