



Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund 2026

U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, Public Diplomacy Section,  
Department of State

Opportunity number: PDSKLAEIF2026

Application deadline: May 10, 2026

Table of Contents

- A. BASIC INFORMATION .....4**
  - 2. Executive Summary .....4**
- B. ELIGIBILITY .....5**
  - 1. Eligible Applicants .....5**
  - 2. Cost Sharing or Matching.....5**
  - 3. Other Eligibility Requirements .....5**
  - 4. This opportunity will not support: .....5**
- C. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.....6**
  - 1. Project Background, Goals, and Objectives .....6**
  - 2. Substantial Involvement .....9**
- D. APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT .....9**
  - Content of Application .....9**
    - 1. Mandatory application forms ..... 10**
    - 2. Proposal (15 pages maximum) ..... 10**
    - 3. Budget Justification Narrative ..... 11**
    - 4. Attachments..... 13**
- E. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES ..... 14**
  - 1. Contact for additional information: ..... 14**
  - 2. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)..... 14**
  - 4. Submission Dates and Times..... 15**
  - 5. Funding Restrictions ..... 15**
  - 6. Other Submission Requirements: Copyrights and Proprietary Information ..... 17**
- F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION..... 17**
  - 1. Review Criteria..... 17**
  - 2. Indirect Costs..... 20**
  - 3. Review and Selection Process..... 20**
  - 4. Risk Review ..... 20**
- G. AWARD NOTICES ..... 21**
- H. POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION..... 21**
  - 1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements..... 21**
  - 2. Reporting..... 23**

**3. Branding and Marking**.....23

**I. OTHER INFORMATION**.....24

**Guidelines for Budget Justification**.....24

**STEP Enrollment** .....25

**U.S Department of State  
U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, Public Diplomacy Section  
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

**A. BASIC INFORMATION**

**1. Overview**

<b>Funding Opportunity Title</b>	Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund Malaysia 2026
<b>Funding Opportunity Number</b>	PDSKLAEIF2026
<b>Announcement Type</b>	Initial Announcement
<b>Deadline for Applications</b>	May 10, 2026, 11.59pm GMT +8
<b>Assistance Listing Number</b>	19.022
<b>Length of performance period</b>	12 months
<b>Number of awards anticipated</b>	4
<b>Award amounts</b>	\$5,000 - \$100,000
<b>Total available funding</b>	\$100,000
<b>Type of Funding</b>	FY26 Educational and Cultural Exchanges
<b>Anticipated projects start date</b>	August 26, 2026

**Funding Instrument Type:** Cooperative agreement

**Project Performance Period:** Proposed projects should be completed in 12 months or less. **This notice is subject to availability of funding.** The Public Diplomacy Section reserves the right to award less or more than the funds described under circumstances deemed to be in the best interest of the U.S. government, pending the availability of funds and approval of the designated grants officer.

**2. Executive Summary**

The Public Diplomacy Section of the U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur announces an open, competitive opportunity for alumni of U.S. government exchange programs to propose projects that expand the impact of America's investment in their professional development.

**OPTION 1: General AEIF Grants (\$5,000-\$35,000)** supports Malaysian alumni who design and implement practical, results-oriented initiatives that advance U.S. policy priorities and promote American interests as outlined below.

**OPTION 2: The AEIF Borneo Alumni Reunion 2026 (Up to \$100,000)** is a tri-national summit that will transform our alumni across Borneo (Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei) into a powerful network amplifying America's soft power reach.

**Freedom250:** All successful AEIF Malaysia 2026 proposals must clearly celebrate and promote the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America (Freedom250) and align

with the Administration's key goals: making America safer, strengthening our nation, expanding our prosperity, and defending freedom of speech.

## **B. ELIGIBILITY**

### **1. Eligible Applicants**

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

- Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/nongovernmental organizations
- Public and private educational institutions
- Individuals
- Public International Organizations and Governmental institutions

### **2. Cost Sharing or Matching**

Cost sharing or matching is encouraged but not required for this funding opportunity.

### **3. Other Eligibility Requirements**

All organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid registration in SAM.gov. Please see Section E.3 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

### **4. This opportunity will not support:**

- Projects relating to partisan political activity;
- Charitable or development activities; including direct social services such as medical, psychological, and/or humanitarian support
- Construction projects;
- Projects that support specific religious activities;
- Fund-raising campaigns;
- Lobbying for specific legislation or programs
- Scientific research or surveys;

- Commercial projects;
- Projects intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the organization;
- Projects that duplicate existing projects;
- Illegal activities

## **C. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

### **1. Project Background, Goals, and Objectives**

#### 1. Project Background, Goals, and Objectives

#### **Policy Framework**

AEIF Malaysia 2026 projects must clearly advance America First foreign policy principles by demonstrating how alumni-led engagement makes the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous, while celebrating Freedom250 and American excellence.

Priority will be given to projects that:

- Deliver tangible benefits to U.S. economic, security, or strategic interests;
- Elevate U.S. leadership and reinforce the United States as the partner of choice
- Clearly promote positive perceptions of the United States and American excellence; and
- Contribute to long-term partnerships that benefit the United States.

All projects must focus on at least one of the priority areas outlined below and clearly articulate how activities and messaging:

- Promote positive perceptions of the United States and American excellence;
- Advance U.S. economic, security, or strategic interests; and
- Contribute to durable, alumni-driven partnerships that benefit the United States.

#### **Priority Areas**

##### **1. Maritime Security and Regional Stability**

Projects that strengthen cooperation on maritime domain awareness, counter-piracy, illegal fishing prevention, and protection of critical sea lanes, demonstrating U.S. leadership in Indo-Pacific security architecture and regional maritime partnerships.

## **2. Digital Economy and Technology Innovation**

Projects that advance digital transformation, e-commerce development, fintech innovation, and technology entrepreneurship. Initiatives should highlight U.S. leadership in digital innovation, cybersecurity best practices, and responsible technology governance that supports economic competitiveness and positions the United States as the preferred partner in the digital economy.

## **3. Cross-Border Trade and Economic Integration**

Projects that facilitate regional economic cooperation, small and medium enterprise (SME) development, supply chain resilience, and market-based economic growth. Activities should reflect the strength and competitiveness of the U.S. free market economy and trade partnerships, while fostering deeper commercial ties that benefit U.S. businesses and advance U.S. economic interests.

## **4. Counter-Transnational Crime and Illicit Networks**

Projects that address human trafficking, wildlife trafficking, illegal logging, drug smuggling, and other transnational criminal activities through prevention-focused education, public awareness, and regional cooperation. Efforts should demonstrate U.S. leadership in law enforcement capacity building and regional security partnerships, strengthening rule of law and enhancing the security environment in ways that support U.S. interests.

## **5. Countering Malign Influence and Promoting Free Speech**

Projects that build resilience against foreign malign influence, bolster independent media and fact-based public discourse, and support transparency and accountable governance. Projects should demonstrate U.S. leadership in defending democratic values, freedom of expression, and open information environments.

## **Project Audience**

Primary beneficiaries of AEIF Malaysia 2026 projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Emerging leaders seeking to expand professional collaboration and leadership impact;
- Youth and early-career professionals developing workforce, digital, entrepreneurial, or technical skills aligned with economic growth sectors;
- Educators, entrepreneurs, civil society professionals, or public and private sector practitioners engaged in innovation, applied education, maritime security, environmental sustainability, or digital economy initiatives;
- Alumni working in sectors critical to regional cooperation, including trade, security, and technology innovation.

Target audiences may vary depending on project design but should clearly identify geographic reach, professional background, and demographic characteristics relevant to project objectives.

## Goals

### **Option 1: General Malaysia AEIF 2026**

Malaysia's Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) 2026 competition will strengthen the impact of the U.S. government's investment in exchange participants by empowering Malaysian alumni to design and implement projects that advance U.S. policy priorities and promote our shared strategic interests.

### **Option 2: Borneo Alumni Reunion 2026**

The Borneo Alumni Reunion must engage alumni from all three countries on the island of Borneo—Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei—in an impactful reunion that:

- Builds a durable, tri-national island-wide alumni network;
- Connects alumni across sectors and borders; and
- Advances U.S. policy priorities
- Introduces professional and business opportunities linked to American business interests.

### **Overall Project Goal**

AEIF is designed to increase the impact of the U.S. government's investment in exchange participants and programs by helping alumni implement projects that support U.S. policy objectives, promote shared strategic interests, and reinforce the United States as the partner of choice.

## Objectives

All successful AEIF projects must include at least one of the following objectives:

### **1. Network Building**

Bring together alumni from different U.S. government exchange programs to build or expand a dynamic alumni network that can work jointly on shared priorities and increase regional and global collaboration among alumni.

### **2. Strengthening U.S.–Alumni Partnerships**

Strengthen the relationship between alumni and the U.S. government so we can work as partners on activities that address mutual goals and common challenges, and that advance U.S. economic, security, and strategic interests.

### **3. Leadership and High-Impact Community Projects**

Support alumni as they develop their leadership skills and carry out high-impact projects in their communities that highlight the value of U.S. cooperation, promote positive perceptions of the United States, and deliver clear, lasting results that benefit U.S. interests.

## **2. Substantial Involvement**

U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur will have substantial involvement in the development, content, and schedule of the project. In consultation with the U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, the award recipient must actively engage all relevant U.S. embassies related to the recruitment and selection process as well as communication with the participants.

Working closely with U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, the recipient of this cooperative agreement shall develop a robust program for the project; schedule the event at a mutually agreed upon location; develop the agenda and content for the project; and generate content for social media and other publicity.

The recipient is expected to provide all design files, photos and video recorded, as well as a promotion-ready, U.S. Embassy approved photo album and a video series of the project after completion.

Regular, transparent communication via email, phone and video conference calls and face-to-face meetings (as appropriate) with the grants officer, grants officer representative, and program officer throughout the period of performance is critical to the success of this cooperative agreement.

## **D. APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT**

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

### **Content of Application**

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars
- All pages are numbered
- All documents are formatted to fit 8 ½ x 11 paper, and
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12-point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

The following documents are required:

## 1. Mandatory application forms

- SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance – organizations) or SF-424-I (Application for Federal Assistance --individuals) at grants.gov
- SF-424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs) at grants.gov
- SF-424B (Assurances for Non-Construction programs) at grants.gov

## 2. Proposal (15 pages maximum)

Applicants must submit a complete narrative proposal in the format of their choice. The proposal should contain sufficient information so that anyone not familiar with it will understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. The proposal must include all the items below:

- **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed project, including project objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Introduction to the Organization or Individual applying:** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program, including information on all previous grants from the State Department and/or U.S. government agencies as well as experience with and expertise in areas related to those described in the NOFO.
- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed
- **Program Methods, Design, Activities, and Deliverables:** The "goals" describe what the program is intended to achieve. The "objectives" refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable. Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Proposed Project Schedule and Timeline:** The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **Key Personnel:** Names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. What proportion of their time will be used in support of this program?
- **Project Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees (if applicable).
- **Beneficiaries:** Please provide an estimated number of direct and indirect beneficiaries. Direct beneficiaries are defined as people who directly participate in your project. Indirect beneficiaries are usually not directly connected with the project but will still benefit from it. Example: Direct beneficiaries: 200 trained teachers; Indirect beneficiaries: 10,000 students (taught by trained teachers).
- **Communication and Outreach Plan:** The communication and outreach plan should lay out how you will promote your project and through which channels. Include social media, websites, print news, or other forms of media you intend to use to share

information. Include in the plan how you intend to engage your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate and how you will report project highlights and achievements.

- **Monitoring & Evaluation Plan:** Proposals must include a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) that explains how the applicant plans to track project performance and measure progress toward the project's goals and objectives. Refer back to your established project goal/s and project objectives. Consider the data needed to effectively monitor progress toward specific outputs and outcomes as well as how you will collect the data. Use well-crafted indicators to measure a project's progress toward the desired results. The PMP should include "If-Then" statements to illustrate how the project activities will lead to the intended results, along with a short datasheet outlining proposed project activities and the indicators that will be used to measure success.

### 3. Budget Justification Narrative

- **Detailed Budget** - Applicants must submit a detailed line-item budget. Line-item expenditures should be listed in the greatest possible detail. The budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent on the following budget categories: *personnel; fringe benefits; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs*. Personnel salaries should include the level of effort and the rate of pay, which should cover the percentage of time each staff member will dedicate to grant-based activities. If an organization is charging an indirect cost rate without a NICRA, it must apply it to the modified total budget costs (MTDC), refer to 2CFR§200.1. Budgets shall be submitted in U.S. dollars and final grant agreements will be conducted in U.S. dollars.
- **Budget Justification Narrative** – Applicants must submit a budget justification narrative to accompany the detailed line-item budget. The purpose of the budget justification narrative is to supplement the information provided in the detailed budget spreadsheet by justifying how the budget cost elements are necessary to implement project objectives and accomplish the project goals. The budget justification narrative is a tool to help Embassy staff fully understand the budgetary needs of the applicant and is an opportunity to provide descriptive information about the requested costs beyond the constraints of the budget template. Together, the detailed budget spreadsheet, the budget justification narrative, and the SF-424A should provide a complete financial and qualitative description that supports the proposed project plan and should be directly relatable to the specific project components described in the applicant's proposal.

#### Additional Budget Notes:

- **Awards to Individuals:** Please note the following budget guidelines for the Individual Award:

- Salary/Honoraria: Only the award recipient may receive salary/honoraria from this funding mechanism. The Recipient must be the primary point of contact and manage all programmatic activities.
- Contractual Costs: Additional individuals working on the award are only permissible through contracted services, if the services are not related to the core programmatic activities. Expenses for services such as accounting, legal support, social media management, website designer, etc., are allowable.
- Other Direct Costs: Expenses related to securing venues, managing logistics, catering, etc. are allowable.
- **Audit Requirements:** Please note the audit requirements for Department of State awards in the Standard Terms and Conditions <https://www.state.gov/m/a/ope/index.htm> and 2CFR200, Subpart F – Audit Requirements. The cost of the required audits may be charged either as an allowable direct cost to the award OR included in the organization's established indirect costs in the award's detailed budget.
- **Visa Fees:** Include all visa application and related fees in your budget as applicable. Please note DS-2019s for post-funded programs must be submitted directly by the award recipient. If you anticipate your program will include the DS-2019 visa processing, your organization must be a registered Designated Sponsoring Organization. For more information go to: <https://j1visa.state.gov/sponsors/become-a-sponsor/>
- **Costs NOT supported by this opportunity include:**
  - Staff salaries & office space
  - Large items of durable equipment or construction programs
  - Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments not integral to the project, or entertainment
  - Any airfare to/from the United States and its territories (except U.S. Citizen alumni in support of project implementation)
  - Activities that take place in the United States and its territories
  - Academic or scientific research
  - Charitable or development activities
  - Provision of direct social services to a population
  - Individual scholarships
  - Social travel/visits
  - Gifts or prizes
  - Duplication of existing programs
  - Institutional development of an organization
  - Venture capital, for-profit endeavors, or charging a fee for participation in the project
  - Support for specific religious activities
  - Fund-raising campaigns
  - Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation

#### 4. Attachments

- **Key Personnel Resumes:** A résumé, not to exceed one page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff persons, such as the Project Director and Finance Officer, as well as any speakers or trainers (if applicable). If an individual for this type of position has not been identified, the applicant may submit a 1-page position description, identifying the qualifications and skills required for that position, in lieu of a résumé.
- **Letters of support from program partners:** Letters of support should be included for sub-recipients or other partners. The letters must identify the type of relationship to be entered into (formal or informal), the roles and responsibilities of each partner in relation to the proposed project activities, and the expected result of the partnership. The individual letters cannot exceed 1 page in length.
- **Indirect Costs:** If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA should be included in the application submission.
- **Proof of Non-profit Status:** Documentation to demonstrate the applicant's non-profit status (e.g., U.S.-based organizations should submit a copy of their 501(c)(3) Internal Revenue Service determination letter, and non-U.S. organizations should provide evidence of non-profit status issued by a government entity).
- **Proof of Registration:** A copy of the organization's registration should be provided with the proposal application. U.S.-based organizations should submit a copy of their IRS determination letter. Malaysia-based organizations should submit a copy of their certificate of registration from the appropriate government organization.

**Other items NOT required/requested with the application submission, but which may be requested if your application is approved to move forward in the review process include:**

- a. Copies of an organization or program audit within the last two (2) years
- b. Copies of relevant human resources, financial, or procurement policies
- c. Copies of other relevant organizational policies or documentation that would help the Department determine your organization's capacity to manage a federal grant award overseas
- d. Documentation that demonstrates the recipients' plan and/or policy to safeguard PII of participants and beneficiaries. It is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure protection of personally identifiable information (PII) and safeguard PII when collecting, maintaining, using and disseminating such information
- e. Information to determine what financial controls and standard operating procedures an organization uses to procure goods and services, hire staff and track time and attendance, pay for grant-related travel, and identify other financial transactions that may be necessary to undertake the project activities
- f. The Embassy reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial information regarding the proposal.

## E. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

### 1. Contact for additional information:

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact:  
[KualaLumpurYSEALI@state.gov](mailto:KualaLumpurYSEALI@state.gov)

### 2. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

**Required Registration:** All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards.

An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from this NOFO.

The 2 CFR 200 also requires subrecipients to obtain a UEI. Please note the UEI for subrecipients is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a subrecipient.

**Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.**

- Organizations based in the United States or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- Organizations based outside of the United States and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- Organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities. If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove an NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket ("incident") with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at [www.fsd.gov](http://www.fsd.gov) using the following language: "I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain an NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated."

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should follow the below instructions:

**Step 1:** Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

### **Exemptions**

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See 2 CFR 25.110 for a full list of exemptions.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

**Please note:** Any applicant with an exclusion in the System for Award Management (SAM) is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension."

## **4. Submission Dates and Times**

**Submission Deadline:** All applications must be received by May 10, 2026 at 11.59 p.m. GMT +8.

## **5. Funding Restrictions**

i. **Funding Restrictions for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA):** None of the funds awarded resulting from this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be made available for subawards, direct financial support, or otherwise used to provide any payment or transfer to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

ii. **Certification Regarding Compliance with Applicable Federal Anti-Discrimination Laws:** If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this NOFO will be within the United States, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award: a. Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code and; b. It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

iii. **Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan:** Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds \$500,000: a. To the best of the Recipient's knowledge, neither the Recipient, nor any subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor of the Recipient or any agent of the recipient or of such a subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor, is engaged in any of the activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a); b. The recipient has implemented a Trafficking in Persons compliance plan to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175(a) and is compliant with this plan; and the compliance plan must follow the minimum requirements described in 2 CFR 175(b)(5). c. That the Recipient has and will implement procedures to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a) and to monitor, detect, and terminate any subrecipient, contractor, subcontractor, or employee of the recipient engaging in these activities.

Recipients do not need to submit a copy of the plan. However, they must provide it to the Grants Officer upon request, and as appropriate, must post the useful and relevant contents of the plan or related materials on its website and at the workplace. Recipients must re-certify on an annual basis for the entire award period of performance.

#### **iv. Prohibition on Unmanned Aircraft Systems Manufactured or Assembled by American Security Drone Act-Covered Foreign Entities**

##### **(a) Definitions.**

- American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity means an entity included on a list developed and maintained by the Federal Acquisition Security Council (FASC) and published in the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov>
- FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system means an unmanned aircraft system manufactured or assembled by an American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity.
- Unmanned aircraft means an aircraft that is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft.
- Unmanned aircraft system means an unmanned aircraft and associated elements (including communication links and the components that control the unmanned aircraft) that are required for the operator to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system.

(b) **Prohibition.** Recipients of funding under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (including subawards and subcontracts issued by the recipient) will be prohibited from:

1. delivering any FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system, which includes unmanned aircraft (i.e., drones) and associated elements;
2. Operating a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system in the performance of the award; and
3. Using Federal funds for the purchase or operation of a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system.

(c) **Exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.** The prohibitions described above will not apply if the agency determines that an exemption, exception, or waiver applies and the award indicates that

such a determination has been made. [See sections 1823 through 1825 and 1832 of Public Law 118-31 (41 U.S.C. 3901 note prec.) for statutory requirements pertaining to exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.].

v. **Pre-Award Costs:** Pre-award costs are not an allowable expense for this funding opportunity.

vi. **Construction:** Any award made as a result of this NOFO will not allow for construction activities or costs.

vii. **Direct Social Services:** Costs that cover and provide direct social services, such as welfare, charity, health or economic relief, are unallowable. Medical assistance, such as costs to include medical professionals, including but not limited to doctors, nurses, and psychiatrists to participate in the project activities are not allowed.

## **6. Other Submission Requirements: Copyrights and Proprietary Information**

Applications may be submitted electronically through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) or MyGrants

If any of the information contained in your application is proprietary, please note in the footer of the appropriate pages that the information is Confidential – Proprietary. Applicants should also note what parts of the application, program, concept, etc. are covered by copyright(s), trademark(s), or any other intellectual property rights and provide copies of the relevant documentation to support these copyrights.

Applicants must acquire all required registrations and rights in the United States, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei. All intellectual property considerations and rights must be fully met in the United States, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei.

Any sub-recipient organization must also meet all the U.S., Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei requirements described above.

## **F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **1. Review Criteria**

Criteria: Each application submitted under this announcement will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the criteria enumerated below. The criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed project, and to determine the likelihood of its success.

#### **Relevance to Application Theme – 30 points**

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

The project clearly demonstrates a direct contribution to current U.S. foreign policy priorities. The project will positively impact America's reputation among foreign government partners. The project will positively impact America's reputation among foreign publics.

The proposal does not include any activities contrary to the following Executive Orders:

- Executive Order 14173: "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity"
- Executive Order 14287: "Protecting American Communities from Criminal Aliens"
- Executive Order 14168: "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government"

### **Degree of Alumni Involvement – 15 points**

Projects must include the involvement of at least two (2) exchange alumni from the tri-national Borneo region (Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei). They may be the project team leaders or collaborate directly with the Public Diplomacy Section in formulating the project. More than two alumni may comprise the team, however, the minimum is two. As the team leaders, the alumni must be closely involved in project planning, implementation, etc. Applicants should ensure that the proposal includes the following information for each alumni team member: first name, last name, e-mail address, exchange program, country of citizenship, roles and responsibilities.

### **Participation and Support from Local Partners – 10 points**

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

### **Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants – 15 points**

- The project proposal demonstrates that the organization has sufficient expertise, skills, and human resources to implement the project, including internal controls in place to manage federal funds. If sub-awards are proposed, applicant demonstrates experience managing subawards.
- The organization demonstrates that it has a clear understanding of the underlying issue that the project will address.
- The organization demonstrates capacity for successful planning and responsible fiscal management. This includes a financial management system, a bank account, and if applicable, satisfactory audit findings.

- Applicants who have received grant funds previously have been compliant with applicable rules and regulations, including the Award Provisions and Standard Terms and Conditions.
- Where partners are described, the applicant details each partner's respective role and provides curriculum vitae (CVs) for persons responsible for the project and financial administration. Proposed personnel, institutional resources, and partners are adequate and appropriate.

### **Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 10 points**

The project plan is well developed, with sufficient detail about how activities will be carried out. The proposal specifies target audiences, participant recruitment, and geographic areas of implementation. The proposal outlines clear, achievable objectives. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline. The project scope is appropriate and clearly defined.

### **Budget – 10 points**

The budget and narrative justification are sufficiently detailed. The budget demonstrates that the organization has devoted time to accurately determine expenses associated with the project instead of providing rough estimates. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The results and proposed outcomes justify the total cost of the project. Budget items are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation – 5 points**

The project proposal includes an M&E plan. The applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward goals and objectives outlined in the proposal. The proposal includes output and outcome indicators and shows how and when those will be measured. An M&E plan should be reviewed for the following:

- Completion
- Applicability and logic of objectives and indicators
- Clear approach to monitoring
- Adherence to SMART criteria
- Feasibility of baselines and targets
- Data quality plan
- Capacity to implement plan

Funded projects will have their plans finalized during the negotiation phase, and monitoring plans may be subject to periodic updates throughout the life of the project.

### **Communication, Media, and Outreach Plan – 5 points**

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

## 2. Indirect Costs

If two or more applications receive equivalent scores based on the evaluation criteria outlined in this NOFO, preference will be given to the applicant with the lower indirect cost rate, as consistent with Executive Order 14332, Section 4(b)(iii). This preference will only be applied as a tie-breaking mechanism and does not supersede the primary evaluation criteria.

## 3. Review and Selection Process

a. **Acknowledgement of receipt.** Applicants will receive acknowledgment of receipt of their proposal.

b. **Review.** All submissions are screened for technical eligibility. If a submission is missing any required forms/documents listed above in Section D. Application Contents and Format, it will be considered ineligible and will not be reviewed by the grants review committee. A technical review panel will review eligible proposals based upon the criteria noted in this NOFO.

c. **Follow up notification.** Applicants will generally be notified within 120 days after the NOFO deadline regarding the results of the review panel.

## 4. Risk Review

i. Under the merit review as required by 2 CFR 200.206, prior to making a Federal Award the Department will review and consider the following risk factors: a. Financial stability b. Management systems and standards c. History of performance d. Audit reports and findings e. Ability to effectively implement project requirements f. Country and programmatic risk considerations, including operational and security risks associated with project implementation in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei. Certain geographic areas may present elevated risks due to ongoing conflict, civil unrest, restricted access, infrastructure limitations, or disruptions to transportation, communications, or financial services. Applicants proposing activities in higher-risk locations should demonstrate appropriate risk mitigation measures, including contingency planning, participant safety considerations, and flexible implementation approaches.

### ii. High Risk Designation

Awardees that are deemed to be high risk based on the above risk factors will be held to special award conditions. At a minimum, the recipient and/or project designated as High Risk will be required to submit monthly narrative reports and/or quarterly detailed financial reports. Recipients may also be required, upon request of the Grants Officer or Grants Officer Representative, to provide electronic copies of receipts or other supporting documentation (e.g., timesheets, travel documents) for costs incurred. The Grants Officer may withhold 20% of the

award amount until final reports have been reviewed and approved by the GO. The recipient may be required to pay all salaries supported by the grant via electronic funds transfer. Other special award conditions may also be included if deemed appropriate by the Grants Officer.

## **G. AWARD NOTICES**

The award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The award agreement is the authorizing document, and it will be provided to the recipient for review and counter-signature. The recipient may only start incurring project expenses beginning on the start date shown on the award document signed by the Grants Officer.

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

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

### **Payment Method:**

Recipients will be required to request payments by completing form SF-270—Request for Advance or Reimbursement and submitting the form to the Grants Officer.

Recipients may not draw down funds without the affirmative authorization of the Department of State. In addition, recipients must submit, with each SF-270 payment request, a detailed explanation justifying the request.

## **H. POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include:

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following:

- Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
  - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
  - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty (E.O. 13798) and Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
  - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
  - Terminating agreements pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340). For the avoidance of doubt, the Department has sole discretion over the determination that an award no longer effectuates program goals or agency priorities, and this provision permits awards to be terminated at the Department's convenience, including when it determines that the award no longer advances the national interest.
- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT
- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION
- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)
- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY
- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS
- Recipients must comply with all applicable Executive Orders. A searchable list can be found in the Federal Register: <https://www.federalregister.gov/>

## 2. Reporting

**Reporting Requirements:** Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify what reports are required and how often these reports must be submitted. Note: most recipients will be required to submit quarterly program progress and financial reports throughout the project period. The quarterly progress report must include updated M&E data for that quarter. Progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final certified programmatic and financial reports are due 120 days after the close of the project period.

All reports are to be submitted electronically.

The Awardee must also provide the Embassy on an annual basis an inventory of all the U.S. government provided equipment using the SF428 form.

**Foreign Assistance Data Review:** As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or regions or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

## 3. Branding and Marking

The Department of State, its programs, and U.S. Government funding and assistance should be easily identifiable to the Department's global audiences.

Recipients of federal assistance awards must follow the branding guidance published at Guidance for Contracts and Grants - U.S. Department of State Brand System. Branding policy exceptions are outlined in the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual 10 FAM 416, Policy Exceptions. For more information, visit: <https://brand.america.gov/>

In addition to the Department of State branding guidance referenced above, recipients of new Public Diplomacy awards **promoting Freedom 250** activities will also be required to incorporate the Freedom 250 logos in all program materials, activities, and communications.

The recipient will be expected to follow all existing marking and branding requirements in accordance with Department branding guidance. The Freedom 250 logos would be used in addition to, not in place of, these requirements.

## I. OTHER INFORMATION

### Guidelines for Budget Justification

**Personnel and Fringe Benefits:** Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the program, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the program.

**Travel:** Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program, for program staff, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. If the program involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

**Equipment:** Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property that is required for the program, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least \$10,000 per unit.

**Supplies:** List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the program. If an item costs more than \$10,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

**Contractual:** Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also describe any sub-awards to non-profit partners that will help carry out the program activities.

**Other Direct Costs:** Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All "Other" or "Miscellaneous" expenses must be itemized and explained.

**Indirect Costs:** These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of 15% of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) as defined in 2 CFR 200.1.

**"Cost Sharing"** refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers' time and donated venues.

**Alcoholic Beverages:** Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages and other entertainment related expenses.

## **STEP Enrollment**

U.S. citizens who travel to Malaysia are encouraged to enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) available at: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. Enrollment enables citizens to receive security-related messages from the Embassy and makes it easier for us to locate you in an emergency. The Embassy also recommends that all travelers review the State Department's travel website at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for the Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Malaysia Specific Information.