

Department of State**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO):**

FY2024 TechWomen Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement**Funding Opportunity Number:** SFOP0009997**Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number:** 19.415**Key Date/Application Deadline:** October 6, 2023**Executive Summary:**

The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Global Leaders Division, of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) invites proposal submissions for the FY 2024 TechWomen program to empower, connect, and support the next generation of women leaders in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The exchange program uses a mentorship model to support emerging STEM leaders from Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, South and Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Organizations applying for this federal award should demonstrate the capacity to recruit, select, and place in mentorship experiences a total of approximately 100-110 women from select countries in these regions to participate in a five- to six-week intensive peer-mentoring program in the United States. The mentoring experience should focus on advancing the status of professional women in STEM industries through project-based peer mentorships, skill building, networking opportunities, and enhancement activities. Funding will also support follow-on activities in the participants' home countries that inspire and encourage girls and university-age women interested or working in STEM-based careers, engage young women using technology in their professions, and support former participants of the program ("alumnae"). Award applicants must exhibit their ability to manage all program logistics and overseas follow-on programming, including a one-time TechWomen Alumnae Summit. The recipient will be awarded \$3,930,000 for the overall FY 2024 TechWomen program, with \$850,000 of that total amount supporting the Alumnae Summit.

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**A.1. Authority**

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the

United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

A.2. Purpose

Since 2011, TechWomen has supported women engaged in STEM industries from specific countries by providing a highly-tailored mentorship experience in the United States with American women representing leading science and technology companies and institutions. Pending the availability of FY 2024 funding, TechWomen will link approximately 100-110 female participants ("emerging leaders") who have at least two years of professional experience in STEM industries with female peer "mentors" in the United States for a five- to six-week mentorship program to support the emerging leaders' development in STEM industries and enable them to reach their full potential in a science and technology career. For purposes of this NOFO, the term "emerging leaders" refers to the international female participants and "mentors" refers to the American women who mentor these female participants during the program. Emerging leaders work with their American mentors on specific projects based on their professional interests and experience at technology and innovation companies, an experience enhanced by several workshops designed to build their understanding of technology's integral relationship with the professional world. Approximately four to six months after the U.S.-based mentorships conclude, several of the American mentors will travel to select participating countries for one week to lead seminars, trainings, and networking activities for participants and other women in STEM industries, as well as workshops for young girls that will focus on careers in science and technology. In 2024, a one-time Alumnae Summit will bring together TechWomen alumnae and U.S. mentors for professional development workshops and the first TechWomen Alumnae Seed Grant Pitch Competition.

The overall goals of the program are to:

- Empower emerging leaders to advocate for their rights and reach their full potential in the science and technology industries;
- Create and maintain a sustainable professional network of support for women in STEM industries in the United States and participating countries;
- Develop the field of technology, explore the role of the tech industry in economic stability, increase the trade capacity of the participating countries, and promote economic advancement;
- Build an understanding of technology's integral relationship with the professional world and increase participants' understanding of how Americans drive development in science and technology;
- Enhance U.S. science and technology companies' understanding of challenges in other countries, providing them opportunities to hear first-hand from the international participants about the STEM and market climates overseas;

- Provide women in STEM industries with tools not only to advance their careers and encourage innovation, but also to become role models for women and girls in their communities;
- Expand girls' interest in STEM careers by exposing them to female role models; and
- Increase mutual understanding between key networks of professionals in different parts of the world.
-

In October 2022, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced five new TechWomen program deliverables to be executed over the next ten years. These include:

- An expansion to Europe to engage and empower women in STEM industries, starting with Albania and Montenegro.
- An expansion to America's Heartland and launch TechWomen programming in Chicago.
- A TechWomen Global Alumnae Summit to include TechWomen alumnae and mentors.
- A collaboration between ECA's TechWomen and TechGirls programs to create a pipeline for TechGirls alumnae to join TechWomen. For more information about TechGirls visit the TechGirls website [Home - TechGirls \(techgirlsglobal.org\)](https://techgirlsglobal.org).
- A collaboration between ECA's TechWomen, TechGirls, and TechCamps programs to build on pre-existing efforts to engage and empower local STEM communities around the world. For more information about TechCamps visit the [TechCamps website](https://techcamp.america.gov/) <https://techcamp.america.gov/>.

A.3. Program Specific Guidelines

A.3.1. Eligible Countries and Participants: The below countries/territories are expected to participate in the FY 2024 TechWomen program. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program's needs and availability of funds. In addition, the Bureau reserves the right to adjust and/or add additional countries and/or regions should conditions change in a partner country and/or if other countries and/or regions are identified as viable alternatives.

Europe (EUR): Albania and Montenegro

Sub-Saharan Africa (AF): Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Zimbabwe

South and Central Asia (SCA): Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

Middle East and North Africa (NEA): Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, and Tunisia

Participants must be women residing in the above countries/territories who are engaged in professional careers that require significant STEM expertise/knowledge and/or innovative application of these skills, and who already are, or show promise of being, role models for others in their countries, particularly for women. “STEM” should be interpreted broadly to include – but not be limited to – the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, education, and business with STEM components. Participants must have at least two years of work experience in a field that explicitly and directly involves and applies science, technology, engineering, or mathematics in meeting professional goals. All participants must be proficient in written and spoken English.

Up to five participant slots must be set aside for eligible TechGirls exchange program alumnae (exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/techgirls).

A.3.2. Mentorships: Each participant should be matched with one female U.S. mentor who is a mid-level professional at a host company. Each participant will also have the support of a female American(s) separate from the professional mentor to help ease the participant’s adjustment to, and familiarize her with, American society. Lastly, an American should be assigned to support action plan teams (groups of participants from the same program country) throughout the action plan process from ideation and iteration through pitching their solution at the end of the TechWomen program. See “A.4. Award Recipient Responsibilities” below for more detailed information on mentorships.

A.3.3 Alumnae Engagement: Building and maintaining connections among participants across world regions before, during, and after the program is a critical part of the program’s success. Equally important is building and maintaining connections of alumnae across all cohort years who are from the same country. Proposals should include plans to create and maintain an engaged network of alumni. The network should advance alumni’s professional development goals and interests and the Department of State’s public diplomacy objectives.

Applicants should also incorporate ECA alumni initiatives into their plans and communications for alumni programming, including, but not limited to, the online community on the International Exchange Alumni website (exchangealumni.gov) and other exchange alumni opportunities offered by the U.S. Department of State such as small grants and professional development seminars. It is important that all alumni programs continue to strengthen a sense of identity with the U.S. government, as such, the applicants should follow ECA communications guidance for crediting the U.S. Department of State.

A.3.3.1 Overseas Follow-On Programming: An important component of TechWomen is the execution of at least two follow-on overseas programs per year (excluding FY 2024) to continue providing professional support to alumnae of the program, share new STEM experiences, and conduct STEM outreach to a larger population of women and girls. Select American mentors

will travel to at least two of the foreign participants' home countries in Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, and/or the Middle East and North Africa several months after the conclusion of the U.S.-based program to engage with TechWomen alumnae; offer skills development sessions and workshops for a broader range of local participants, including young girls and undergraduate women; and promote the TechWomen program to future participants. The selected countries, approved by ECA in consultation with regional bureaus and posts, should be in at least two different geographic regions. The program model should support the development of an international professional network for women working in STEM fields both within and outside of the participants' home countries; provide continued resources and mentoring to TechWomen alumnae; and create concrete sustainable action plans to ensure a broad multiplier effect. To this end, TechWomen participants will develop action plans while in the United States to take on projects that benefit others in their communities after they return home. Applicants should include a plan to eliminate the financial barrier that may prevent the participation of some mentors and alumnae who do not have either the personal funds or the support from their employer to travel for TechWomen overseas trips. This may include, but not limited to, setting aside funding to support the travel of those who are in need. Additional information on overseas follow-on projects and engagement is provided in section "in section "A.4. Award Recipient Responsibilities" below.

A.3.3.2 Alumnae Summit: The award recipient will be responsible for planning and implementing a one-time two-three day alumnae summit in the one of the participating countries in the Middle East and North Africa (NEA) region. The event should take place no later than December 2024 in a location that is conveniently located and cost-effective, featuring discussions and/or workshops on building professional development skills, a networking reception, and an alumnae seed grant competition. The summit should allow for the TechWomen alumnae community to gather and reconnect across cohorts and program countries for the first time in program history. Approximately, 100-200 TechWomen alumnae should be selected to participate. Applicants should incorporate the TechWomen mentor community into programming.

A.3.4 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA): Applicants must incorporate diversity in every aspect of the program. This includes, but not limited to, establishing a TechWomen DEIA mission and value statement and setting specific, benchmarked DEIA goals. This should include establishing goals and project plans related to increasing mentor diversity, developing cultural competency training for TechWomen mentors and participants, and increasing the inclusivity of TechWomen events.

A.3.5. Partner Organizations: Award applicants must identify the U.S. and foreign organizations and individuals with whom they are proposing to collaborate to recruit and select participants

overseas through an open, merit-based competition, to secure mentorships in the United States at leading science and technology firms, and to implement alumnae and follow-on programming. Proposals should contain letters of commitment or support from any partner organizations with which the applicant plans to work to secure the mentorships, for the follow-on overseas programming, and one-time 2024 Alumnae Summit. A description of any previous cooperative activities with these partner organizations should be included in the proposal, along with information about their mission, activities, and accomplishments. Applicants should clearly outline and describe the roles and responsibilities of all partner organizations in terms of project logistics, management, and oversight. Proposals should also include letters of intent and/or commitment from U.S.-based science, technology, and innovation companies or organizations that would be willing to host a TechWomen participant from Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, and/or the Middle East and North Africa. Since diversity is an important pillar of the work in ECA, organizations are strongly encouraged to propose organizations that take all aspects of diversity into account.

A.3.6. Projected Timeline:

ECA envisions the approximate dates of the FY 2024 TechWomen to be as follows:

- *January 2024:* Planning meetings with ECA and finalization of general program plans
- *January 2024 – August 2024:* Planning meetings with ECA for Alumnae Summit, and recruitment and selection of Summit participants
- *November 2024 – December 2024:* Implementation of Alumnae Summit
- *November 2024 – May 2025:* Recruitment, selection, and notification of foreign participants for general program. Recruitment campaign for U.S. hosting companies/institutions
- *March 2025 – June 2025:* Securing U.S.-based mentors and host sites
- *July 2025 – September 2025:* Visa issuance for selected participants and pre-departure preparations
- *September 2025 – November 2025:* Travel to the United States by foreign participants for orientation, placement at mentorship sites, and a debriefing in Washington, D.C. (that includes a closing reception)

- *January 2026 – May 2026: Alumni Engagement Activities*

In the two renewal years in FY 2025 and FY 2026, the timeline will be similar with the exception that the Alumnae Summit activities would be removed.

A.3.7. Competitive proposals for TechWomen will include the following:

- A robust recruitment and merit-based selection process for approximately 100-110 participants from Albania, Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe. Every effort should be made to recruit individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences including women from marginalized or underserved populations or individuals with disabilities.
- A clearly articulated overview of all U.S.-based activities, including but not limited to outreach to American companies/institutions to secure host sites and/or other support (assistance with workshops, venues, etc.); outreach to American women in STEM-related fields willing to serve as mentors; monitoring and support of participants during the mentorship; pre-departure information, arrival orientation; and a closing forum that allows for a debriefing/evaluation session for all the participants at the conclusion of the program in Washington, D.C. Every effort should be made to recruit host sites and mentors that represent diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- An outreach and recruitment strategy for how the applicant will successfully integrate the European region and corresponding participants from the countries into the TechWomen program.
- A strategy to ensure the description of the participants' follow-on action plans are integrated into the broader program, are concrete and measurable, and benefit participants' communities.
- A description of the two follow-on overseas projects (including workshops, seminars and/or other activities) conducted by the American mentors who will travel overseas several months after the U.S.-based mentorships have concluded in renewal year one in FY 2025 and two in FY 2026.
- A thorough description of the one-time 2024 Alumnae Summit, including potential participating country locations in the NEA region, suggested workshops and activities, potential locations, embassy engagements, and approximate number of participants. Both alumnae and mentors should be included as participants and the applicant should include details on how alumnae and mentors can apply to attend the summit.
- A staffing plan that details how staff will fulfill all responsibilities, outline appropriate staffing levels and structure to effectively implement all proposed activities and

initiatives. Resumes of experienced staff proposed to work on execution of the TechWomen program.

- A comprehensive plan to evaluate how the program's outcomes will achieve the specific objectives described in the narrative, to include a data collection strategy to demonstrate the program's effectiveness both in the United States and all participating regions overseas.
- A strong plan to incorporate DEIA in all aspects of the program.
- A proposed timeline detailing TechWomen activities and how they support the program's goals.
- Letters of commitment from U.S. companies or organizations to serve as possible host mentoring sites.
- Letters of commitment from any proposed partner organizations/subrecipients that will assist the applicant in implementing TechWomen. Award applicants should clearly outline and describe the roles and responsibilities of all proposed partner organizations/subrecipients in terms of project logistics, management, and oversight. Applicants should also include their proposed strategy for vetting partner organizations.
- A post-award plan that demonstrates how both the mentors and participants can maintain contacts initiated during the program, as well as with past participants; and
- A budget reflecting a cooperative agreement request not to exceed \$3,930,000 for the overall FY 2024 TechWomen program, with \$850,000 of that total amount supporting the one-time Alumnae Summit.

A.4. Award Recipient Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

1. Develop and conduct a comprehensive recruitment and selection process that includes a clearly articulated plan to ensure a diverse group of participants, including those with disabilities. In addition, set aside up to five participant slots for TechGirls alumnae;
2. Identify properly vetted U.S.-based companies and individuals with whom collaboration on mentorships and networking opportunities is possible; demonstrate robust engagement with the private sector to expand networking opportunities and secure mentorship hosts in small-, medium-, and large-sized companies;
3. Create program guidelines and other relevant materials for U.S. host organizations;
4. Arrange appropriate and meaningful project-based mentorships of five to six weeks in duration for all the participants at U.S.-based science and technology companies or institutions;
 - a. The program should include a peer mentor at the host company, separate support for cultural/social activities outside the office, and support for action planning process, with additional educational and cultural programming, as appropriate;

- b. According to their expertise and interests, participants should be placed individually, or in small groups, in companies located within tech hub areas of the United States that will afford them a support network;
 - c. Based on each participant's interests and goals, the award recipient will ensure that the mentorship is designed around a specific project or effort in a host company or institution that is clearly relevant to the participant's professional goals;
- 5. Issue participant DS-2019 forms and ship to the applicable U.S. embassies or consulates for all international participants and alternates. All international participants will travel on either the U.S. government designation or International Visitor for the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor program;
- 6. Enroll participants in the Bureau's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) for the duration of the program, issue health benefits identifications cards, and assist with claims as necessary. More information on ASPE is available at <https://www.sevencorners.com/about/gov/usdos> www.usdos.sevencorners.com;
- 7. Conduct group pre-departure orientations prior to international travel of finalists; this should set expectations about the overall program and host placements and involve alumnae of the program;
- 8. Provide pre-departure orientation materials to the applicable U.S. embassies/consulates to conduct orientations for finalists before departing their home countries and/or supplement the orientations conducted by the award recipient;
- 9. Arrange all appropriate program-related travel to/from and within the United States for TechWomen participants, including but not limited to transportation, lodging, and meals and incidental expenses;
- 10. Conduct a group arrival orientation at the beginning of the program in the United States;
- 11. Monitor participants – including their safety and well-being – and monitor the performance of host companies/institutions for the duration of the U.S. program;
- 12. Create a comprehensive one- to three-day closing program in Washington, D.C. that showcases the mentoring relationships forged during the exchange and affords participants the opportunity to network with U.S. government officials and those working on STEM-related issues. The award recipient responsibilities include handling all logistical arrangements for a closing reception. The award recipient will be responsible for the costs of the reception and for all travel by the 100-110 participants to Washington, D.C. for the debriefing, as well as all lodging (maximum 4 nights) and transportation for the participants in Washington, D.C.;
- 13. Conduct a debriefing/evaluation session at the conclusion of the U.S.-based mentorship/program;
- 14. Promote mutual understanding and partnerships between key professional groups in the United States and counterpart groups in eligible countries;

15. Create sustainable professional mentoring relationships between U.S. and foreign participants, as well as with past TechWomen participants;
16. Planning and implementing a **one-time** two-three day alumnae conference for approximately 100-200 TechWomen alumnae, featuring discussions and/or workshops on building professional development skills, a networking reception, and an alumni seed grant competition;
17. In renewal year one (FY 2025) and renewal two (FY 2026), develop at least two follow-on overseas projects (approximately one week each) after the conclusion of the U.S.-based program in at least two of the participants' home countries in Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, and/or the Middle East and North Africa (the selected countries should be in at least two different geographic regions). The award recipient will be responsible for all logistical arrangements to carry out these follow-on projects overseas. During the projects, the award recipient should arrange at least two-three workshops and/or interactive presentations for at least 25 local girls (within the age range of 12-18) in each country visited to expose them to role models and insights into what it means to be a female leader in the STEM fields. The award recipient should collaborate with the U.S. embassies or consulates and make every effort to include TechGirls alumnae in these workshops. At the end of each overseas project, there should be a debriefing and evaluation session with the participants. The award recipient will be responsible for providing guidance on international flights, lodging, and visas for U.S. mentors traveling overseas for the follow-on projects. However, the U.S. mentors and their companies/institutions will be primarily responsible for funding the international flights, lodging, and any needed visas, with the exception of those who will receive financial support from the program. The award recipient will arrange and pay for all local transportation in the destination country (e.g., buses or vans needed to get to and from events in the capital city);
18. Develop a plan to connect and expand the network of STEM professionals in eligible countries;
19. Engage TechWomen alumnae in each participating region;
20. Craft a comprehensive outreach strategy that fully utilizes online and social media platforms to highlight participant and alumnae achievements, collaborative projects, and new initiatives. This includes collecting, updating, and making available for consumption by the public and Department representatives the narrative stories, anecdotes, and any quantifiable data that illustrate the impact and multiplier effect of TechWomen both overseas and in the United States;
21. Handle the publication (both in print and online) of all program materials for TechWomen designed and arranged in collaboration with ECA and the respective U.S. embassies/consulates. Relevant materials include those to advertise and promote the program (both in the United States and overseas), orientation materials, mentoring guidelines, and materials for activities conducted in the participants' home countries. Materials and website designs must be approved by ECA prior to publication and/or

distribution. See section “D.12. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients” for additional information;

22. Promote and support community development/impact projects following the participants’ U.S. mentorships;
23. Evaluate the program and its impact on the participants, host companies/organizations, and their communities;
24. Manage financial aspects of the program including timely disbursement of participant stipends, housing allowances, etc. and promptly report any irregularities in the budget or spending to ECA;
25. Participate in regular program reviews with ECA (in person or by telephone) to assess program implementation and identify matters of concern. The award recipient should report programmatic, financial and statistical information to ECA including brief monthly email updates outlining general programmatic activities conducted during the past month and anticipated programmatic activities to be conducted the following month;
26. Provide a detailed staffing plan to include the names, titles, and portfolio breakdown of all staff who will work on TechWomen. Any changes to key personnel must be submitted to ECA for approval;
27. Respond fully and promptly to requests for program information from ECA; and
28. Ensure compliance with the terms of the Cooperative Agreement with ECA, including, but not limited to, submitting timely financial and program reports and proper budget oversight.

A.5. Substantial Involvement:

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring, as follows:

1. Provide assistance to the recipient including guidance on all program activities and final approvals of key project plans and activities, including the Alumni Summit and approval of locations of all main program components;
2. Collaborate with the award recipient on the outreach and selection of mentors and host sites;
3. Approve host companies and institutions/organizations;
4. Approve final selection of participants;
5. Review and approval of all program publicity and other materials;
6. Approve program timelines and agendas;
7. Assist with Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)-related issues;
8. Assist with participant emergencies;
9. Liaise with relevant U.S. embassies and country desk officers at the U.S. Department of State, particularly in terms of recruitment and selection efforts, and follow-on program

activities; Assist in arrangements for the debriefing session in Washington, D.C., and the closing reception;

10. Work with the award recipient to publicize the program through various media outlets and social media platforms of ECA and Public Diplomacy Sections (PDSs) at U.S. embassies/consulates overseas;
11. Monitor and evaluate the program, as necessary, through site visits or debriefing sessions; and
12. Conduct an annual performance evaluation/review.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A.5. Substantial Involvement under A. Program Description.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2024

Approximate Total Funding: \$3,930,000, pending the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: One.

Approximate Average Award: \$3,930,000, pending the availability of funds.

Minimum "Floor" of Award: \$3,930,000, pending the availability of funds.

Maximum "Ceiling" of Award: \$3,930,000, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Award Date: January 5, 2024, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Project Completion Date: May 30, 2026.

Additional Information: Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for two additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

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.) ECA's grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in ECA funding. ECA anticipates making one cooperative agreement, in an amount of \$3,930,000 to support all costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

b.) All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, and the PSI; non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

c.) Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the PSI document.

C.3. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds

There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this competition. However, ECA encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, 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.17. "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.

In addition to information included in the PSI, proposals should include:

Program Narrative

Executive Summary (One page)

In one double-spaced page, provide the following information about the project:

1. Name of organization/participating institutions
2. Beginning and ending dates of the program
3. Nature of activity
5. Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources

6. Scope and Goals

- a. Number and description of participants
- b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
- c. Geographic diversity of program, both U.S. and overseas
- d. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

Narrative

In twenty (20) double-spaced, single-sided pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below.

1. Vision (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits)
2. Participating Organizations
3. Program Activities
4. Program Evaluation
5. Alumni Engagement/Follow-on
6. Project Management
7. Work Plan/Time Frame

Additional Information to be Submitted

- Detailed Budget (see section D.14.a. Allowable Costs)
- The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.
- Calendar of activities/itinerary, if applicable
- Sample materials
- Letters of endorsement
- Resumes and CVs (resumes of all staff should be included in the submission; no resume should exceed two pages.)
- First Time Applicant Attachments, if applicable.

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 (FAPIS)

- 1.) The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);
- 2.) An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. Currently, federal agencies create integrity records in the integrity module of the Contractor Performance Assessment and Reporting System (CPARS) and these records are visible as responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov;
- 3.) The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, 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 §200.206 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://afsism.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 program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The award recipient will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of 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, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) and Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to ECA's authorizing legislation, "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, geographic location, education, income, socio-economic status, and other diversity dimensions, that may hinder inclusion. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility 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, Inclusion, and Accessibility" 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, Inclusion, and Accessibility” section in the “Proposal Submission Instructions” (PSI) document for specific suggestions on incorporating DEIA 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 on page vi, and Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) (<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>)
- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
 - o Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities.

- E1.1.04: Percent of participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government (core indicator)
 - E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator)
 - E1.1.10: Percent of foreign participants who traveled to the United States for the first time during their program (core indicator)
 - E1.1.12: Percent of foreign participants indicating a change in understanding of third-party countries' cultures and values.
 - E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American people (core indicator)
 - E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries.
 - o Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster participant's belief that civic engagement benefits communities/countries
 - E2.2.01: Percent of participants who have more confidence in their ability to have an impact in their home country (core indicator)
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
 - E3.0.02: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of Americans (core indicator)
 - E3.0.04: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of third country nationals.
 - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries.
 - E4.0.01: Percent of participants reporting increases in their job skills as a result of their program participation.
 - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation.
 - E4.0.05: Percent of participants who report an increase in technical skills as a result of their program participation.
 - o Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs.
 - E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
 - E4.1.04: Number of professional placements
- 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 participant surveys (core indicator)

Performance Monitoring Plans (PMP)

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://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and->. 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.
 - 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 participant 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 participants 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 participants/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 participants – 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 program participants. Organizations should consider how they will implement virtual exchange activities, given the potential limits to internet access from participants in some locations and while continuing to advance foreign policy objectives and achieve lasting benefits for U.S. citizens and international participants.

In addition to planning for virtual exchange activities if in-person programming is prohibited, ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s) is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project-by-project basis.

D.12. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients

All ECA Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

D. 13. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial

ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as "America250" – a truly global celebration. As the period of performance for this award is scheduled to cover part or all of calendar year (CY) 2026, the applicant may wish to consider ways the program can celebrate America250. Any America250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any

ECA-provided America250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

D.14. Budget Format

Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget, a detailed budget, and a budget narrative. Applicants must provide a separate sub-budget for the one-time FY 2024 base year Alumnae Summit.

D.14.a. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

1. International and domestic air fares; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs; airline baggage and seat fees; and in-country travel costs for visa processing purposes. Given the requirements associated with obtaining J-1 visas for ECA-supported participants, applicants should include costs for any travel associated with visa interviews or DS-2019 pick-up. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act. There is no charge for J-1 visas for participants in Bureau-sponsored programs.
2. Per Diem. For U.S.-based programming, organizations should refer to the published federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>. ECA requests applicants to budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed federal per diem rates. Foreign per diem rates for overseas activities can be accessed at: https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78
3. Return Travel Allowance. A return travel allowance of approximately \$70 for each foreign participant may be included in the budget. The allowance may be used for incidental expenses incurred during international travel.
4. Cost of housing in the United States. The award recipient will be responsible for providing clean, safe and reasonably located housing for the TechWomen participants during their stay in the United States.
5. Orientation Costs. The award recipient will conduct a comprehensive pre-departure and arrival orientation for all the TechWomen participants. Additionally, the award recipient will provide to posts overseas appropriate informational materials about TechWomen and the logistics involved in traveling to the United States. This information will be used by posts to conduct pre-departure orientations and/or supplement the orientations conducted by the award recipient, for the TechWomen participants in each country.
6. Accident and Sickness Insurance. The TechWomen participants will be covered under the terms of a U.S. Department of State-sponsored health insurance policy. The premium is paid by the U.S. Department of State directly to the insurance company.
7. COVID/Other Medical Expenses. Applicants should budget for potential medical expenses that may come up that are not covered by ASPE. This can include, but not limited to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and at-home covid test.

8. Consultants. Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Daily honoraria may not exceed \$250 per day. Subcontracting organizations may also be used, in which case the written agreement between the prospective award recipient and the subcontractor should be included in the proposal. Subcontracts should be itemized in the budget.
9. Room Rental. Room rental may not exceed \$250 per day per event or activity.
10. Materials Development. Your proposal may contain costs to purchase, develop and translate materials for participants and mentors.
11. Wire Transfer Fees. When necessary, applicants may include costs to transfer funds to partner organizations overseas. Award recipients are urged to research applicable taxes that may be imposed on these transfers by host governments.
12. Debriefing and Reception in Washington, D.C. After the conclusion of the U.S.-based mentorships, the TechWomen participants will take part in a one- to three-day debriefing and closing reception. The award recipient will be responsible for all costs involved in the debriefing, including the transportation for the participants to Washington, as well as their housing and meals while there. The award recipient will also be responsible for all expenditures incurred for the reception.
13. Awarding of small grants/seed funding for select TechWomen participants' action plans they put together while in the United States to take on projects that benefit others in their communities after they return home and other alumni activities.
14. Costs involved in TechWomen overseas follow-on programming (projects of approximately one week each) in at least two countries in Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, and/or the Middle East and North Africa (the selected countries should be in at least two different geographic regions).
15. Travel support to eliminate any potential financial barrier that may prevent the participation of some mentors and alumnae who do not have either the personal funds or the support from their employer to travel for TechWomen overseas trips.
16. Website Expenses. Program branded website development, design, and maintenance costs.
17. Reasonable Accommodations. Organizations should budget for the reasonable accommodations of individuals with disabilities. Proposals should reflect plans to make necessary program modifications or participant numbers should these funds be used for reasonable accommodations.
18. Shipping costs for DS-2019 and other items.
19. Alumnae Summit. No less than \$850,000 of the FY 2024 budget should be spent on supporting this one-time event. This includes, but is not limited to staff support, travel, hotel accommodations, and supplies.
20. Overhead and Staffing Costs. Costs necessary for the effective administration of the program may include salaries for recipient organization employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the Application Package. Applicants are strongly encouraged to keep overhead and staffing costs as low as possible. ECA

encourages applicants to include cost sharing contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner, and other sources. Please also include in your budget plans for one or more staff of the recipient organization to travel to Washington, D.C. (if not already located in D.C.) to meet with your program officer within the first 45 days after the cooperative agreement has been awarded.

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

D.15. Key Personnel

ECA recommends that the applicant identify intended key personnel positions via an asterisk (*) or other marking in the proposal budget, budget narrative, or a separate appendix. If not provided in the application, recipients must submit the names, titles, and brief biographical sketches of key personnel to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions, VI. Recipient Responsibility and Compliance with Federal Requirements (link to: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>).

D.16. Application Deadline and Method of Submission

Application Deadline Date: Friday, October 6, 2023

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.17. 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.17.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.17.b. How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov

For access to complete instruction on how to apply for Notice of Funding Opportunities on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>

D.17.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.17.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 (GRANTXXXXXXX) 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.18. 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. 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.

2. Multiplier Effect/Impact: Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.

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

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 Grants Staff. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Applicants who can demonstrate a strong private sector network to secure placements through their own resources will be deemed more competitive under this review criterion.

5. Follow-on Activities: Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without ECA support) ensuring that ECA supported programs are not isolated events.

6. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): 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.

7. Cost-effectiveness and Cost-sharing: The overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items 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. Region and Topic Specific requirements

The following additional requirements apply to this project:

F.3.a Palestinian Authority, West Bank, and Gaza Programming

All awards made under this competition must be executed according to all relevant U.S. laws and policies regarding assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and to the West Bank and Gaza. Organizations must consult with relevant Public Affairs Offices before entering into any formal arrangements or agreements with Palestinian organizations or institutions.

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact Sydney Plunkett, plunkettsl@state.gov, phone number: 202-890-9920 or Anne Shue, ShueA@state.gov, 771-205-6598 for additional information.

F.4. 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.

F.5. Program Data Requirements: Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with ECA as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.

2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three workdays prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Sydney Plunkett, U.S. Department of State, The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Global Leaders Division ECA/PE/C/GL, 202-890-9920, PlunkettSL@state.gov or Anne Shue, ShueA@state.gov, 771-205-6598 U.S. Department of State, The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Global Leaders Division ECA/PE/C/GL,

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

Date

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State