



Notice of Funding Opportunity

Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund 2026

U.S. Embassy Harare, Department of State

Opportunity number: AF-HAR-FY26-01

Application deadline: May 15, 2026

Table of Contents

A. BASIC INFORMATION3

B. ELIGIBILITY4

C. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION5

D. APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT.....7

E. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES 10

F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION..... 14

G. AWARD NOTICES 16

H. POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION..... 17

I. OTHER INFORMATION 18

**U.S Department of State
AF/Harare, Public Diplomacy Section
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

A. BASIC INFORMATION

1. Overview

Funding Opportunity Title	Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund 2026
Funding Opportunity Number	AF-HAR-FY26-01
Announcement Type	Initial Announcement
Deadline for Applications	May 15, 2026, 5 p.m. CAT
Assistance Listing Number	19.022 – Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs
Length of performance period	12 months
Number of awards anticipated	2 awards (dependent on funding availability)
Award amounts	Awards may range from a minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$35,000 (approximately)
Total available funding	\$70,000 pending availability of funds
Type of Funding	FY26 Educational and Cultural Exchanges (ECE)
Anticipated project start date	Within 45 days of notification of funding approval

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 U.S. Department of State’s Embassy Harare announces an open competition for past participants (“ exchange alumni”) of U.S. government-funded exchange programs to submit applications to the 2026 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF 2026). The Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) is an annual funding opportunity designed to invest in U.S. government-funded exchange participants and programs by helping exchange alumni develop and implement projects that promote shared interests and policy objectives and benefit local communities. We invite you to submit proposals for projects that meet the requirements of the program (discussed in Section C below). Please read this notice carefully before preparing and submitting a funding proposal. The range of funding is **\$5,000 to \$35,000 USD** for AEIF projects.

This solicitation does not constitute an award commitment by the U.S. government. A final award cannot be made until the proposal has been reviewed and approved, and an award agreement is drawn up and signed by a grants officer. The U.S. Mission reserves the right not to issue an award after receipt of any proposal. The U.S. Mission also reserves the right to reduce,

revise, and/or increase a proposal budget in accordance with the needs of the program and availability of funds. Please follow all instructions below.

-----**Please do not apply for this funding opportunity if you're not an alumni of a U.S. government-funded exchange program.**-----

B. ELIGIBILITY

1. Eligible Applicants

The following are eligible to apply:

- Alumni who participated in a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program.
- Project involves **at least two** U.S. government-sponsored exchange program alumni, and one is a **specified team lead**.
- Alumni associations from countries with current U.S. representation, but such applications must **specify an alumni team lead**.
- If three or more alumni are applying together, U.S. citizen alumni may be included on alumni teams, but the team must have **at least two** non-U.S. citizen exchange program alumni. U.S. citizen alumni cannot be team leads on project proposals.

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.

Applicants are only allowed to submit one proposal per organization. If more than one proposal is submitted from an organization, all proposals from that institution will be considered ineligible for funding under this funding opportunity.

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
- 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
- Staff salaries & office space;
- Social travel/visits;
- Venture capital, for-profit endeavors, or charging a fee for participation in the project;
- Large items of durable equipment or construction programs;
- Gifts or prizes;
- Provision of direct social services to a population;
- Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments not integral to the project, or entertainment;
- Individual scholarships;
- Activities that take place in the United States and its territories;
- Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation;
- Travel for international alumni to the U.S.;

C. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. Project Background, Goals, and Objectives

- The Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) supports innovative, alumni-led projects that leverage the expertise, leadership, and networks of U.S. government exchange alumni to address local and national challenges aligned with U.S. foreign policy priorities.
- AEIF 2026 will prioritize proposals that align with the celebration of the 250th anniversary of U.S. independence (Freedom250) by advancing digital freedom, innovation, peace, and prosperity. Competitive proposals must clearly demonstrate how their projects contribute to making the United States more prosperous and show American excellence. Applicants should highlight American excellence and leadership across sectors while promoting increased trade and commercial ties between the United States and Zimbabwe.
- AEIF 2026 proposals must strengthen cross-program alumni collaboration, deepen partnerships between alumni and the U.S. government, and maximize the long-term impact of U.S. exchange investments by supporting alumni-led projects that advance shared interests and deliver measurable benefits to local communities.

Important notes:

- Projects teams must include teams of at least two (2) alumni.
- Alumni teams may be comprised of alumni from different exchange programs and different countries, however activities must take place in Zimbabwe.

- Applications must be submitted by exchange alumni or alumni associations of U.S.G exchange alumni. Not-for-profit, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions are not eligible to apply in the name of the organization but can serve as partners for implementing project activities.

Project Audience(s): The project will be implemented in Zimbabwe and will target multiple audiences, including emerging and established leaders. It will serve diverse groups with distinct characteristics and tailored objectives to maximize impact and strengthen cross-sector collaboration.

U.S. Exchange Alumni

Geographic Location: Nationwide, with targeted outreach to provinces and secondary cities, while fostering regional (Southern Africa) and global alumni linkages.

Age Group: Primarily early- to mid-career professionals.

Profession: Entrepreneurs, civil society leaders, educators, public servants, technology innovators, media professionals, and emerging policy leaders.

Emerging Young Leaders and Community Stakeholders

Geographic Location: Local communities where alumni-led projects will be implemented, including rural and peri-urban areas.

Age Group: 18–35 years old.

Profession: Students, recent graduates, early-stage entrepreneurs, grassroots organizers, and community advocates.

Local Institutions and Partner Organizations (Tertiary Audience)

Geographic Location: National and regional institutions collaborating on project activities.

Age Group: Institutional (not age-specific).

Profession: Universities, innovation hubs, private sector companies, civil society organizations, and local government entities.

Objective for this audience: Build sustainable partnerships with alumni and the U.S. government to advance shared goals, strengthen institutional collaboration, and amplify the impact of exchange programs.

Project Goal: To strengthen and expand a collaborative, cross-program U.S. Exchange Alumni network that deepens alumni engagement with the U.S. government, fosters regional and global partnerships, and increases the long-term impact of U.S. exchange investments through alumni-led initiatives that address shared priorities and benefit local communities.

Project Objectives:

- Celebrating and promoting the U.S. 250th Independence (Freedom250) through projects that advance digital freedom, innovation, peace and prosperity.
- Showcase American excellence and leadership across sectors.
- Promote Trade and Commerce between the United States and Zimbabwe.

2. Substantial Involvement

The award will be implemented as a cooperative agreement, with the U.S. Embassy Harare playing an active role throughout the process. The Embassy will engage directly in the design, oversight, and monitoring of program activities to ensure they align with U.S. government priorities and public diplomacy objectives.

The U.S. Embassy will:

- Provide strategic guidance to ensure activities align with Mission goals and Administration priorities.
- Collaborate with the Recipient in refining program design, timelines, and key deliverables.
- Review and approve work plans, branding and marking plans, key program materials, speaker selections, and public communications.
- Participate in select program activities, including opening/closing sessions, site visits, and alumni engagements.
- Support outreach by leveraging Embassy platforms and networks, including U.S. Exchange Alumni networks.
- Monitor implementation progress through regular check-ins, reporting reviews, and evaluation consultations.

The Recipient will:

- Lead day-to-day program management, logistics, financial oversight, and implementation of approved activities.
- Coordinate closely with the Embassy Public Diplomacy Section on planning, messaging, and stakeholder engagement.
- Submit required reports, work plans, and evaluation data in accordance with award requirements.
- Ensure compliance with all federal assistance regulations and branding/marketing guidelines.

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 applicant authorized signatures are provided where indicated on the various, required forms.

The following documents are **required**:

1. Mandatory application forms

- AEIF26 Proposal and Budget Template at grants.gov and zw.usembassy.gov/grants
- 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](https://www.grants.gov) (note: the SF-424B is only required for individuals, organizations exempt from registration, and for organizations not required to fully register in SAM.gov)

Additional support materials like workshop agendas, curricula, or previous pilot projects connected to your submission (Optional but strongly recommended).

2. Proposal

The Microsoft Word proposal form, *AEIF 2026 Proposal Form.docx*, must be used. **Do not save as or convert to PDF.**

- **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).
- **Monitoring & Evaluation Plan:** Proposals must include a draft Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). The M&E PMP should show how applicants intend to measure and demonstrate progress towards the project’s objectives and goals. Proposal Form of this funding opportunity contains a template that may be used to fulfill this requirement.

The key components to the PMP are as follows:

- **Monitoring and Evaluation Narrative:** In narrative form, applicants should describe how they intend to monitor and evaluate the activities of their award. In addition, the applicant should describe any M&E processes, including key personnel, management structure (where M&E fits into the overall program’s staff structure), technology, and as well provide a brief budget narrative explaining any line-item expenditures for M&E listed in the program’s budget. If the proposal is from a prior grantee, the proposal discusses how the grantee has adapted, improved or otherwise modified their approach based on learning from previous experience. This narrative is limited to two pages.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Datasheet:** The applicant must include their proposed activities and their expected outputs and outcomes as well as the goals and objectives as

written in the NOFO. The datasheet's purpose is to explicitly illustrate how a project's activities lead to tangible results (such as increased beneficiary skills, knowledge, or attitudes) that ultimately address a PDS objective.

- The selected applicant's M&E PMP is subject to review and approval before any award will be issued under this NOFO. The selected applicant will be required to work with the Public Diplomacy Section's Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist to ensure the applicant's M&E PMP achieves an expected level of expertise and meets PDS objectives.
- Expenses directly associated with monitoring and evaluation are considered allowable. The suggested template includes a space to list the portion of the total budget amount directly associated with monitoring and evaluation activities.

3. Budget Justification Narrative

The Microsoft Excel budget form, *AEIF 2026 Budget Form.xlsx* must be used. **Do not save as or convert to PDF.**

- AEIF 2026 can support the following budget items:
- Travel essential for project implementation. In support of Freedom 250, travel for U.S. citizen alumni is allowed and will be closely evaluated for necessity
- Rental of venues for project activities
- Meals/refreshments integral to the project (i.e., working lunch for a meeting)
- Trainer or speaker honoraria expenses (i.e., maximum \$250/day fee, travel, lodging, per diem)
- Reasonable equipment and materials
- Communications and publicity materials, such as manuals or project advertisements
- Reasonable costs to support virtual programming (i.e., subscription to Zoom, WebEx, camera/microphones for virtual meetings, mailing services, etc.)

Additional Budget Notes:

- **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.

2. 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.

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. Address to Request Application Package

Application forms required above are available at PublicDiplomacyGrants-ZIM@state.gov. You will receive an automatic reply with the application forms. Forms are also available at www.grants.gov

2. Department of State Contacts

If you have any questions about the grant application process, contact: PublicDiplomacyGrants-ZIM@state.gov

Question Deadline: For questions on this solicitation, please email PublicDiplomacyGrants-ZIM@state.gov

Questions must be received on or before April 23, 2026 at 12:30 p.m. Central African Time. Applicants should not expect an email response to questions, as questions received before the deadline will be answered in a question-and-answer document and posted at <http://www.grants.gov>

3. 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. 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 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 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](http://www.ecfr.gov/title-2/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-25/subpart-110/section-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.

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: Applications are due no later than Friday May 15, 2026 – 5:00 pm Central African Time. For determining if an award is submitted on time, PDS will utilize the timestamp provided by Grants.gov. This deadline is firm and is not a rolling deadline. If alumni fail to meet the deadline noted above their application will be considered ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

Only proposals submitted using the official AEIF 2026 forms will be considered for funding. Submitting all application materials directly to the following email address: PublicDiplomacyGrants-ZIM@state.gov. Applicants opting to submit applications via email **must** include the Funding Opportunity Title and Funding Opportunity Number in the subject line of the email. (AF-HAR-FY26-01 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund)

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.

- i. 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

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 and Zimbabwe. All intellectual property considerations and rights must be fully met in the United States and Zimbabwe.

Any sub-recipient organization must also meet all the U.S. and Zimbabwe 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.

- **Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea – 30 points:**

The program idea should be innovative and well developed, with sufficient detail about how project activities will be carried out. The proposals should demonstrate originality and outline clear, achievable objectives that align directly with the priorities and requirements of the NOFO. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline, and the project scope is appropriate and clearly defined. Finally, the proposal aligns with the following:

 - 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 American’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

- **Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants – 25 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.
 - 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** – 20 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** - 10 points:
There is a complete and thorough draft submission of a M&E Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). This will include a list of proposed project activities, corresponding milestone, output, and outcome indicators, a description of data collection methods, and a timeline for collecting such information. The proposal presents a clear theory of change on how the program will address that problem. Use of the suggested template will satisfy these requirements. 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.
- **Sustainability** – 5 points:
The project proposal describes clearly the approach that will be used to ensure maximum sustainability or advancement of project goals after the end of project activity.

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.

2. 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

- 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 10% 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 and Grants Officer Representative.

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 30, 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 should include an up-to-date copy of the PMP datasheet. 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, which requires that materials produced under a federal award be marked appropriately to acknowledge U.S. Government support, recipients of new Public Diplomacy awards promoting Freedom 250 activities must also incorporate the Freedom 250 logos in all program materials, activities, and communications. The recipient should continue 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: Award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages and other entertainment related expenses.

STEP Enrollment

U.S. citizens who travel to Zimbabwe 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 Zimbabwe Specific Information.