Educational and Cultural Affairs

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2024 Study of the U.S. Institutes Madeleine K. Albright Young Women Leaders Program
Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0010289
Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.009
Deadline for Applications: May 6, 2024

Executive Summary: The Study of the U.S. Branch (ECA/A/E/USS), Office of Academic Exchange Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), invites proposal submissions from 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) (see section C. Eligibility Information) for the design and implementation of four (4) Institutes for the Study of the U.S., Madeleine K. Albright Young Women Leaders Program (Albright Young Women Leaders Program). Four Institutes will take place over five weeks in summer 2025. Each Institute will focus on a theme that reflects U.S. foreign policy priorities. The themes selected for these Institutes are: Civic Engagement, Economic Empowerment, Environmental Issues, and Public Policy. See details in section A.3. Program Specific Guidelines.

The Albright Young Women Leaders Program will provide multinational groups of undergraduate female students with a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions while simultaneously developing their leadership skills. Each Institute will be organized for a group of 20 foreign undergraduate women for a total of 80 participants in four concurrent Institutes. Institutes will be approximately five weeks in duration and will include an approximately four-week academic residency at a U.S. academic institution and an approximately one-week integrated study tour that will expose the foreign undergraduate students to a community (or multiple communities) representing a culture and/or region distinct from that of their academic residency. A convening event will bring participants together from all four Institutes for networking and exploration of program themes.

With Congressional encouragement, to honor the legacy of the late Secretary Madeleine K. Albright, who served as the first female U.S. Secretary of State from January 23, 1997, to January 20, 2001, the program will include an emphasis on the democratic principles and values that were upheld and exemplified by Secretary Albright. The SUSIs will include content related to women's leadership in public service and the democratic principles underlying the U.S.

system of federal government. The program will include opportunities for continued follow-on engagement once participants return home.

The award recipient will be responsible for planning, overseeing, and implementing the program, including administering the four Institutes and overseeing all subaward recipients. 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.

It is ECA's intent to award a cooperative agreement of one base year plus two non-competitive continuations (NCCs). Please see section B.) Federal Award Information and NCCs in section D.16. below for additional details.

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

The Albright Young Women Leaders Program is an intensive academic program that provides groups of foreign female undergraduate students with a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions while developing their leadership skills. Institutes will include classroom-based lectures, discussions, readings, and group presentations; site visits and educational travel; leadership development; and community service activities; and opportunities to interact with a wide variety of Americans. The goal is to provide young women leaders from around the world with an in-depth examination of a specific field of study; build knowledge, capacity, and networks among emerging women leaders; and strengthen their understanding of the history and evolution of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions, broadly defined.

A.3. Program Specific Guidelines

ECA intends to conduct the Albright Young Women Leaders Program in person in summer 2025. Each Institute must be approximately five weeks in length; participants will spend

approximately four weeks at a U.S. university or college campus and approximately one week on an integrated educational study tour that complements the academic residency. The program should also include a convening event that will bring together participants from all four Albright Young Women Leaders Institutes. This event should take place over one to two days at the beginning or end of the Institutes. Applicants must propose possible locations for the event, which may include Washington, DC. The event will be planned in conjunction with ECA. It may consist of sector or regional experts, a networking event, and/or participant debriefings.

The academic program will include group discussions, experiential learning activities, and exercises that focus on the Institute theme as well as leadership development, teambuilding, collective problem-solving skills, effective communication, and management skills. Therefore, participants will gain both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Institutes will also include a community service component in which the students participate in weekly volunteer service activities and experience firsthand how nonprofit organizations and volunteerism play a key role in U.S. civil society. Institutes will foster an inclusive environment by incorporating speakers from diverse backgrounds and encouraging open and collaborative discussions.

The Albright Young Women Leaders Program will enhance participants' knowledge of U.S. history, government, institutions, society, and culture while developing their leadership skills. The Institutes will incorporate a focus on U.S. historical events as well as contemporary American life including current political, social, and economic debates in a pluralistic society. The Institutes will examine how government policies, business and private sector practices, and socio-cultural norms engage and affect women through the four thematic lenses presented below. The Institutes will also provide participants with opportunities to discuss current U.S. and global women's issues such as: progress and opportunities for women's leadership; combatting violence against women; addressing income disparity and other challenges to women in the workplace; women's health; and the ways in which women can contribute to global peace, security, and stability. The program will examine the participation of women in the following four Institute themes:

- Civic Engagement (one Institute): topics may include, but are not limited to, active citizenship and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy, civil rights and protections, voting, social justice, gender equity, community-building, grassroots and youth activism, political leadership, media literacy, preventing disinformation, and volunteerism.

- Economic Empowerment (one Institute): topics may include, but are not limited to, an overview of the U.S. economic system and structures, economic prosperity and opportunity, building sustainable economies, economic equality, financial access, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystems, social capital development, financial literacy, and organizational development and management.

- Environmental Issues (one Institute): topics may include, but are not limited to, climate change, sustainable development, clean energy, conservation, environmental justice, ocean protection, pollution, ecotourism, water access, climate entrepreneurship, sustainable agricultural practices and food security, public health, and the impact of climate change on underserved, youth, and minority populations and communities including women.

- Public Policy (one Institute): topics may include, but are not limited to, women in public service; the roles of government, private sector, civil society, and media in the policymaking process; and public policy as it relates to education, public health, economic issues including employment and workforce development, technology and privacy, and diversity and inclusion.

Each Institute (four in total) will host approximately 20 participants, for a total of approximately 80 foreign undergraduate students in summer 2025. All Institutes will take place on U.S. university and college campuses. One cooperative agreement of up to $1,400,000 will support the program in FY 2024 with additional funding in Non-Competitive Continuation Year One in FY 2025 and Non-Competitive Continuation Year Two in FY 2026, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. Each U.S. academic institution selected to host an Institute should plan for costs of approximately $260,000 per Institute.

All Institutes will foster ECA's mission to promote mutual understanding between citizens of the United States and other countries. Thus, the programs will include robust opportunities for participants to meet people from a variety of backgrounds, to interact with their U.S. peers, and to engage with appropriate student and civic groups to share their experiences and life in their home communities. **Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document for more information.**

A.4. Program Administration

ECA intends to issue one cooperative agreement for the design, oversight, and implementation of four Institutes. The recipient may propose to administer all four Institutes through sub-awards or may propose to implement one of the four Institutes and administer sub-awards to host institutions to conduct the remaining three Institutes. No institution will be permitted to host more than one Institute in one fiscal year.

All proposals will demonstrate the institution's administrative and program management capacities, thematic expertise, as well as any regional expertise, if applicable. Participating countries will be determined by ECA, in coordination with Fulbright Commissions, the Public Affairs Sections at U.S. embassies abroad, and Regional Bureaus.

A.5. Participants

ECA anticipates that participants for the four Institutes will be comprised of students from East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Eurasia, the Near East and North Africa, South and Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Each Institute will host approximately 20 participants for a total of 80 participants. Participants will be highly motivated undergraduate students who represent diverse backgrounds, with emphasis on representation of underserved and disadvantaged groups, and who have limited to no international experience. All participants will be women. The recipient will not participate in participant selection. The U.S. embassy and consulates will nominate candidates, and ECA will make the final participant selections. ECA will send a final list of participants to the award recipient.

Please note: ECA reserves the right to amend or modify the list of participating countries should conditions change in the nominating country or if other countries are identified as U.S. priorities, or for other reasons. All participants will be proficient in English. Please see the POGI for more information on participants.

A.6. Recipient Responsibilities

The award recipient is responsible for the conception, implementation, and monitoring of all aspects of the Institutes and follow-on activities. Proposals must provide a detailed and comprehensive narrative describing overarching project objectives. The proposal must also include a sample academic syllabus and calendar for demonstrating how the proposed components relate to the overall theme of the Institute and entire project. For the Institutes, the proposal will demonstrate the applicant's ability to recruit host colleges, universities, or non-profit organizations that reflect regional and other diversity, including public, private, urban, rural, minority serving institutions, and community colleges. Institutes must take place on a U.S. college or university campus. Proposals will also include descriptions of pre-departure preparation and logistics; administrative details and a staffing plan; plans for monitoring and communication with sub-recipients; incorporation of a diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) framework into all aspects of the program; media and outreach plans; budget and budget narrative; and follow-on activities for, and engagement with, program alumni. In addition, the proposal will include a summary of the applicant's thematic experience and expertise.

The activities and the roles and responsibilities of the recipient for this program are outlined in the attached POGI document.

A.7. Substantial Involvement

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. These activities are outlined in the attached POGI document.

A.8. Non-Competitive Continuations (NCCs)

Proposal narratives should include a commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional NCCs, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base year program, with the understanding that the program design, duration, and participant numbers would be similar when/if the subsequent two NCCs are exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if a NCC will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all NCCs.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description above.
Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2024 – base year $1,400,000, pending the availability of funds; FY 2025 – NCC year-one $1,400,000, pending successful performance and the availability of funds; FY 2026 – NCC year-two $1,400,000, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.
Approximate Total Funding: $4,200,000. This figure represents base year plus two NCC years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.
Approximate Number of Awards: One.
Approximate Average Award: $1,400,000, pending the availability of funds.
Minimum "Floor" of Award: $1,400,000, pending the availability of funds.
Maximum "Ceiling" of Award: $1,400,000, pending the availability of funds.
Anticipated Award Date: September 1, 2024, pending the availability of funds.
Anticipated Award Completion Date: December 31, 2028. This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award – one base year plus one/two NCC years.
Additional Information: A cooperative agreement will be awarded for a period of 12 months (base year) with NCCs for a second and third period of 12 and 18 months, respectively, to ensure adequate time for post-Institute follow-on activities. ECA will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise a NCC at least 90 days in advance of expiration of the current year after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to exercise a NCC will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

ECA 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.

C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements

The following additional eligibility requirements apply to this NOFO announcement:

1.) ECA's grant guidelines require that organizations demonstrate at least four years of experience in conducting international exchanges to be eligible for awards exceeding $130,000 in ECA funding. As noted in section B above, ECA anticipates issuing one cooperative agreement, for approximately $1,400,000. Therefore, organizations that do not demonstrate four years of experience in conducting international exchanges in your proposal are ineligible to apply under this competition.

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

3.) In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 & D.5. for more information.

4.) 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 Grants.gov website at https://www.grants.gov or from ECA website at https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding.

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.15. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

D.3. Unique Entity Identifier Number

All organizations are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. 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. ***Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required for federal assistance applications. A UEI is issued as part of the required SAM.gov registration below in section D.5.***

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

D.4. Required Proposal Elements

All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed budget, and budget narrative.

D.5. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM)

All organizations 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. ***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.*** Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

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.

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

Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.

D.6. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov (formerly, FAPIIS)

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://afsitsm.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 emphasis 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 DEIA" 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" 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
    - Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities
        - E1.1.01: Percent of participants reporting that their program experience offered opportunities to engage with other cultures
        - 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)
        - E1.1.19: Percent of participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries
        - E2.0.01: Percent of foreign participants that volunteer in their host communities
        - E2.0.04: Number of hours that foreign participants spend volunteering in their host communities
    - 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)
    - Sub-Objective 3.1: Alumni subscribe to platforms for resources and information-sharing
        - E3.1.02: Percent of participants who learned about new resources

        - E3.1.05: Percent of participants who are connected to ECA through a U.S. Department of State-managed platform
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries
        - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of program participation
    - Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
        - E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
        - E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts (core indicator)
- Objective 6: Increase Capacity of ECA partner institutions to achieve program strategic goals
    - Sub-Objective 6.1: Increase capacity of implementing partners and educational institutions for the internationalization of programs
        - E6.1.02: Number of exchange participants from or hosted by Minority-Serving Institutions participating in ECA (both funded and private sector) exchanges (core indicator)
- 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 (PMPs)
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 detailed, line item budget for the entire program and a budget narrative. Budget requests may not exceed $1,400,000, pending the availability of funds. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

The provided budget format is provided as an aid in organizing the budget, it is suggested but not required as a submission format for your proposal budget.

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. NCCs

Pending successful performance and the availability of funds this award will utilize NCCs as discussed in section A above.

D.16.a. For competitions that will exercise a NCC applicants must submit:

1.) The SF-424A which must include the budget request amount for the base-year of the program.
2.) A detailed proposal narrative and budget for the base year of funding (Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instruction Document (PSI) for general budget guidance.). The narrative should also include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional NCC years, pending successful program performance and the availability of funds.
3.) An abbreviated/estimated summary budget presenting the total projected costs for the anticipated total duration of programming (base year, plus two NCC years).

D.16.b. To exercise the NCC mechanism the recipient will be required to submit:

1.) Performance and financial reports on time.
2.) A request in writing to ECA at least 30 days in receipt of the NCC invitation.
3.) A summary budget that projects expenses through the end of the current year.
4.) A detailed budget outlining expenses for the requested NCC year.
5.) A brief narrative to support the continuation of the award.

D.16.c. For awards using NCCs, in addition to the Substantial Involvement for the Cooperative Agreement, the ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will:

1.) Closely monitor the recipient's performance through site visits, desk audits, mandatory performance and financial reports, consultations, and other forms of communication and dialogue before exercising additional NCCs. (Additional details regarding monitoring and oversight of the program by ECA representatives will be provided at the time the base-year award is made.)

2.) Review and evaluate all quarterly or semi-annual program and financial reports.
   a. All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up to date before ECA will exercise additional NCCs.
   b. Any/all concerns, issues, or modifications requested by the Grants Officer or Program Officer to the original program design or method of implementation must be responded to in writing.
   c. The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will review and advise of ECA's approval or disapproval of the response before issuing subsequent NCCs.

3.) Prior Grants Officer approval is required to utilize the remainder from an unobligated balance from a prior funding period to the subsequent funding period. If the Grants Officer determines that some or all of the unobligated funds are not necessary to perform the program activity, the Grants Officer may decline the Recipient's request to utilize the remainder from the unobligated balance.

The Grants Officer may, at their discretion, use the unobligated balance to reduce or offset future funding for a subsequent funding period. An unobligated balance at the end of a funding period is not sufficient justification to utilize the remainder of funds. A final determination and approval to utilize the remainder of any funds will be communicated via a cost amendment with adjustment, if any, to new obligation amounts.

The request to utilize the remainder from an unobligated balance must include:

1.) A brief narrative why funds remain unobligated and how the unobligated funds will be used to complete the previously approved goals and objectives of the program.

2.) A detailed budget that reflects the amount of unobligated funds to date, and anticipated expenditures in the subsequent period of performance for all cost categories under the authorized budget.

D.17. Application Deadline and Method of Submission
Application Deadline Date: Monday, May 6, 2024
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.18. 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.18.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.18.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.18.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.18.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 (GRANTXXXXXXXX) 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 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.19. Intergovernmental Review of Applications
Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1. Review Process
ECA will check that all proposals meet the technical requirements in this solicitation. Proposals that do not meet the guidelines, including those under the eligibility section above or in the PSI, will be ineligible for further review.

All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office before being reviewed by an ECA grant panel and may be reviewed by Public Diplomacy sections overseas, State Department regional bureaus, or other State Department offices, as appropriate. All reviewers, including the ECA grant panels will review any eligible proposals based on the criteria below. Recommended proposals will be reviewed for compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines, and assessed for risk. Final funding decisions are made by the ECA's Assistant Secretary. Only an ECA Grant Officer has the final authority to issue assistance awards.

E.2. Review Criteria

An ECA grants panel will competitively evaluate all technically eligible applications according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation.

1.) **Quality of Program Idea and Ability to Achieve Program Objectives:** Proposals should be original, well-defined, and relevant to ECA's mission. A detailed staff work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Proposals should

demonstrate how your institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. The objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible.

2.) **Support of DEIA**: Proposals should show how the program and your institution supports ECA's policy on diversity. Proposals should have a clear DEIA plan that is integrated into all aspects of program administration, design, content, and implementation. Proposals should demonstrate how DEIA will enhance the program's goals, objectives, and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated DEIA plan and not simply express general support for the concept of DEIA.

3.) **Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs and responsible fiscal management (past exchange programs need not have been ECA-funded). ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients, including the timely submission of reports, and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be fully qualified to achieve the project's goals.

4.) **Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should discuss provisions made for follow-up with returned participants to establish longer-term individual and institutional linkages. Proposals should also provide a plan for continued follow-on activities (with minimal ECA support), ensuring that ECA-supported programs are not isolated events. Please refer to the POGI for additional information on follow-on activities.

5.) **Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Proposals should have a fully developed M&E plan that includes goals, objectives, and indicators. The plan should be feasible and aligned with the M&E section of this solicitation. Proposals should include a realistic learning plan that outlines how your organization plans to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices. All submitted M&E plans will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided at least the required information outlined in the M&E section of this solicitation and demonstrated the applicant's capacity to carry out the M&E plan.

6.) **Cost-effectiveness/Cost-share:** Proposals should keep the overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost share through other private sector support and 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:
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.

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. Reporting Requirements
Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted. All reports must be submitted in a timely manner. For planning purposes, applicants can expect to 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.

4.) Because the competition will allow for the exercise of NCCs, applicants must submit program and financial reports on time. The due dates for these reports will be included in the cooperative agreement. The program and financial reports must demonstrate substantial progress by addressing progress towards the original approved goals and objectives, relative activities and events, and supporting fiscal data. The reports will be reviewed by both the assigned Grant Officer and Program Officer.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their survey 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.4. 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: Chrissy Mangiaforte and Maegen Smith, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational Affairs, Office of Academic Exchange Programs, ECA/A/E/USS, (202) 230-3820 and (202) 340-7347, MangiaforteCT@state.gov and SmithMC@state.gov.

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 March 5, 2024
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State