

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Support for the Lower Mekong Initiative Young Scientist Exchange Program

This is the initial announcement of this funding opportunity, SFOP0002211

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.124

Application Deadline: August 4, 2017

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of East Asia Pacific Affairs (EAP) announces an open competition for an environmental award of up to \$395,000 to support a regional education project in the Lower Mekong countries of Southeast Asia. Under the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), the EAP Office of Multilateral Affairs and the EAP Office Public Diplomacy work together to support the strengthening of institutional linkage for cooperation among LMI countries under the Education Pillar. Guided by the specific objectives from the LMI 2016-2020 Master Plan of Action, this project proposes **to establish a Young Scientist Exchange Program** where young scientists (ages 18-35) from LMI partner countries are offered research opportunities and engage in exchange programs with participating institutes/research centers on issues deemed challenges for the region.

Proposed project activities must involve all of the following countries: Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and Burma.

Background Scientific knowledge, technology and innovation are keys to region's prosperity and help bridge development gaps, alleviate poverty, and provide alternative paths for sustainable development. Creating opportunities and environments for young people to foster deeper knowledge will encourage the creation of new ideas and innovations that are essential for the region. The **Young Scientist Exchange Program** will support youth and young professionals (ages 18-35) for the 21st century workplace by creating opportunities for collaboration among young scientists from LMI member countries via exchange programs and joint research and workshop/symposiums to share scientific knowledge, ideas and experience.

Objective: To foster collaboration and the sharing of knowledge on science and technology best practices as well as research ideas among young scientists in LMI member countries.

Proposed Activities

(1) Promoting scientific collaboration – the LMI Young Scientist Program will:

- Coordinate and establish a young scientist exchange program among universities/research centers in LMI member countries which encourages joint research in subjects/fields deemed important to Lower Mekong region such as technology, health, energy security, water management, food security, women economic empowerment.
- Coordinate and establish training programs for young scientists from LMI member countries on agreed topics of mutual interest.

(2) Promoting knowledge sharing on science and technology – the LMI Young Scientist Program will:

- Coordinate and organize a young scientist symposium to exchange knowledge and present scientific work on subjects deemed challenges to the region's development, such as disease control and prevention, medicine, and the environment.
- Coordinate and set up an annual contest for young scientists to promote co-operation and interchange between young scientists as well as showcase the best of LMI student scientific achievement.

Expected Results

1. At least five research projects (one per country) are produced under the young scientist exchange program. Projects should provide feasible and practical solutions to Lower Mekong regional challenges.
2. Research ideas and papers will be shared at the LMI Regional Working Group Meetings and other LMI related events.
3. A set of policy recommendations on building education capacity and research collaboration to shared challenges will be presented at the LMI Regional Working Group meeting.
4. Young scientists in the LMI member countries will have more opportunities to cooperate in learning, developing and exchanging knowledge, including technology best practices, all of which will foster new research ideas and help shrink information gaps while promoting more equitable development in the Mekong region.
5. Young scientists will be able to apply new skills to develop new technologies in the region.

This project will last up to 36 months in duration and should clearly outline the project milestones that will be taken throughout to ensure timely and satisfactory completion of the grants goals and objectives. Activities should begin no more than four weeks after the project has been awarded.

The authority for this funding opportunity is found in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA).

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

EAP will make funding available for one grant of up to 395,000 USD subject to the availability of funding.

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EAP may issue one or more awards resulting from this NOFO to the applicant(s) whose application(s) conforming to this NOFO are the most responsive to the objectives set forth in this NOFO. The U.S. government may (a) reject any or all applications, (b) accept an application other than the lowest cost application, (c) accept more than one application, or (d) waive informalities and minor irregularities in applications received.

The U.S. government may make award(s) on the basis of initial applications received, without discussions or negotiations. Therefore, each initial application should contain the applicant's best terms from a cost and technical standpoint. The U.S. government reserves the right (though it is not under obligation to do so) to enter into discussions with one or more applicants in order to obtain clarifications, additional detail, or to suggest refinements in the project description, budget, or other aspects of an application.

Applications should not request more than \$395,000. Applicants should include an anticipated award date between September 1, 2017 – September 30, 2017, and the period of performance should be 36 months.

EAP anticipates awarding either a grant or cooperative agreement depending on the application's risk factor, or the needs of the program, which is determined by the grant officer for applications that are successful. If the grant officer decides to award a cooperative agreement, EAP expects to be substantially involved during the implementation of the cooperative agreement. Examples of substantial involvement can include:

- 1) Approval of the Recipient's annual work plans, including: planned activities for the following year, travel plans, planned expenditures, event planning, and changes to any activity to be carried out under the cooperative agreement;
- 2) Approval of sub-award Recipients, concurrence on the substantive provisions of the sub-awards, and coordination with other cooperating agencies; and
- 3) Other approvals that will be included in the award agreement.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

C.1 Eligible Applicants

EAP welcomes applications from U.S.-based and foreign-based non-profit organizations/nongovernmental organizations (NGO), public international organizations, private, public, or state institutions of higher education.

Other items of note:

- Grants cannot be awarded for research projects.
- Conducting training is allowed.
- Grants can be awarded to universities and NGO/Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- Grants **cannot** be awarded to foreign government agencies, offices, or departments.
- For-profit organizations may apply, but are subject to further review.
- The SF-424 forms must be completed and submitted along with the grant application.
- All fields on the SF-424 and the grant application must be completed in English.
- All organizations applying to this notice will need a DUNS number and SAM.gov registration. This can be obtained online and is free. See Section D for more information. Please see: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/pages/CCRSearch.jsp>

C.2 Cost Sharing or Matching

Providing cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not an eligibility requirement for this NOFO.

C.3 Other

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the System for Award Management (SAM at www.sam.gov) 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.” Additionally no entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Excluded Parties List System in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included as a potential partner.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

D.1 Address to Request Application Package

Applicants can find application forms, kits, or other materials needed to apply on www.grants.gov under the announcement title “Support for the Lower Mekong Initiative Young Scientist Exchange Program” funding opportunity number “SFOP0002211.” Please contact the EAP point of contact listed in section G if requesting reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities or for security reasons. Please note: reasonable accommodations do not include deadline extensions.

GRANT APPLICATION

Please note that all sections must be completed for your grant to be considered.

For all application documents, please ensure:

- 1) All documents are in English and all costs are in U.S. dollars. If an original document within the application is in another language, an English translation must be provided (please note: the Department of State, as indicated in 2 CFR 200.111, requires that English is the official language of all award documents. If any documents are provided in both English and a foreign language, the English language version is the controlling version);
- 2) All pages are numbered, including budgets and attachments;
- 3) All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper;
- 4) All documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10 point Times New Roman font. Font sizes in charts and tables, including the budget, can be reformatted to fit within 1 page width; and
- 5) The executive summary and project description do not exceed three pages.

Complete applications must include the following:

Grant Recipient: *Insert name of organization or person that will receive the grant funds*

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Project Title: *Insert title*

Date of Submission: *Today's date*

Project location(s)/participants: *Insert country/countries and province/cities that will benefit from project*

Have you/your organization previously received U.S. Government funding?: *Yes/No*

Applicants must include the following in the proposal submission. **All submissions must be in English.**

1. Table of Contents that lists application contents and attachments (if any);
2. Completed and signed SF-424, SF-424A and SF424B, as directed on www.grants.gov. The Certifications and Assurances that your organization is agreeing to in signing the 424 are available at <http://statebuy.state.gov/fa/>;
3. If your organization engages in lobbying activities, a Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL) form is required;
4. Proposal Narrative as described in this section below;
5. Detailed Budget Narrative (preferably in Microsoft Word) that includes an explanation for each line item in the spreadsheet.
6. Detailed Line-Item Budget (preferably in Microsoft Excel). A summary budget should also be included using the OMB approved budget categories (see attached template). Costs must be in U.S. dollars. Detailed line-item budgets for sub-recipients should be included in additional tabs within the excel workbook;
7. Detailed Monthly Workplan which should include activities, any evaluation efforts, and final reporting and project closeout.
8. Attachments may be included, (letters of commitment from the applicant institution and sub-award partners, resumes of key personnel, project experience, etc) but should not be unreasonably lengthy; see NOFO for details on required attachments, if any;
9. If your organization has a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, include your latest NICRA as a .pdf file. This document will not be reviewed by the panelist, but rather used by program and grant staff if the submission is recommended for funding and therefore does not count against the submission page limitations. If your proposal involves subgrants to organizations charging indirect costs, please submit the applicable NICRA also as a .pdf file ;
10. A PDF file copy of your organization's most recent financial audit;
11. Number all pages, including budget and addenda.
12. All documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10 point Times New Roman font. Font sizes in charts and tables, including the budget, can be reformatted to fit within 1 page width.

Executive Summary:

In the summary include a synopsis of the proposed project area of focus (e.g., climate, health, etc.) and proposed project goals. How will this project meet the goals outlined?

Grant Description

1A. Background & Purpose:

- *Provide a short background on the project proposal and the issue(s) the project will address.*
- *Include what the project will accomplish.*
- *Include information on key personnel who have appropriate background in the subject area.*

1B. Program Goals to be met:

- *Describe the goals of the proposed program/activities.*

1C. Main Activities to be performed

- *Describe the activities that will take place to meet the goals.*
- *Identify the population and country or countries to be benefited (whether this is an in-country activity for nationals only, or a regional event supporting the participation of participants from multiple countries, for example).*

1D. Expected Results to be met and Performance Indicators:

- *State the expected results of the program with a timeline for completion of activities.*
- *Provide a detailed response to show how the results and goals will be met through the activities in this program.*
- *The project should monitor and report on performance indicators that are specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, and time-bound.*
- *Establish, where possible, performance baseline data and expected performance targets for each expected result, and include details on what sources of data will be used to document performance, how the indicators will be measured, frequency of measurement, and units of measure.*

Project Monitoring and Evaluation

Complete applications will include a plan of how the project's progress and impact will be monitored and evaluated throughout the project. Applications should demonstrate the capacity to provide objectives with measurable outputs and outcomes and engage in robust monitoring and assessment of project activities. The quality of the M&E plan will be judged on the narrative explaining how both monitoring and evaluation will be carried out, and who will be responsible for those related activities

Budget:

1. Completed and signed SF-424, SF-424A, and SF-424B, as found here:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-mandatory-family.html>

2. Cost share:

Does this Grant have a cost share element? If so, describe. Cost share can include time for services, supplies, donations from other organizations towards the same project, etc. (Note: a cost share element is not required.)

3. Budget Narrative:

Budget Narrative that includes substantive explanations and justifications for each line item in the SF-424A budget, as well as the source and a description of all cost-share offered. Personnel costs should include a clarification of the roles and responsibilities of key staff, base salary, and percentage of time devoted to the project.

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 as an Adobe (.pdf) file. If your organization does not have a NICRA per 2 CFR 200. 414(f) the organization can elect to charge the de minimis rate of 10% of the modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68. The budget narrative should indicate what costs will be covered using the 10% de minimis rate.

D.2 Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST), on, August 4, 2017 on www.grants.gov under the announcement title “Support for the Lower Mekong Initiative Young Scientist Exchange Program” funding opportunity number SFOP0002211.

Grants.gov automatically log the date and time an application submission is made, and the Department of State will use this information to determine whether an application has been submitted on time. Late applications are neither reviewed nor considered unless the EAP point of contact listed in section G is contacted prior to the deadline and is provided with evidence of system errors caused by www.grants.gov that is outside of the applicants’ control and is the sole reason for a late submission. Applicants should not expect a notification upon EAP receiving their application.

If ultimately provided with a notification of intent to make a Federal award, applicants typically have two to three weeks to provide additional information and documents requested in the notification of intent. The deadlines may vary in each notification of intent and applicants must adhere to the stated deadline in the notification of intent.

D.3 Funding Restrictions

EAP will not consider applications that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization. No entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM is eligible for any assistance.

Project activities that provide training or other assistance to foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for EAP funding, given purpose limitations on funding.

D.4 Other

Grants.gov Applications

Please be advised that completing all the necessary registration steps for obtaining a username and password from Grants.gov can take more than two weeks.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

D.5 Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Applicants must have an active registration in SAM (www.sam.gov) prior to submitting an application, must prove a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, formerly referred to as a DUNS number, and must continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by the U.S. government.

The Unique Entity Identifier (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. SAM is the Federal government's primary database for complying with FFATA reporting requirements. OMB designated SAM as the central repository to facilitate applicant and recipient use of a single public website that consolidates data on all federal financial assistance. Under the law, it is mandatory to obtain a UEI number and register in SAM.

SAM requires all entities to renew their registration once a year in order to maintain an active registration status in SAM. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure it has an active registration in SAM and to also maintain its active registration in SAM.

No entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM is eligible for any assistance or can participate in any activities in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR Part 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR Part 1989 Comp., p. 235).

EAP may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the

requirements by the time EAP is ready to make an award, EAP may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. An exemption from this requirement may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if: 1. An applicant is a foreign organization located outside of the U.S., does not currently have a UEI, and the Department determines that acquiring one is impractical given the geographic location; or 2. If the applicant's identity must be protected due to possible endangerment of their mission, their organization's status, their employees, or individuals being served by the applicant.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Criteria

Evaluators will judge each application individually against the following criteria, listed below in order of importance, and not against competing applications. While EAP favors projects that are multilateral in nature and that demonstrate results that can be scaled-up, leveraged, or extrapolated for follow-up efforts, we will also consider bilateral projects for countries that receive little or no U.S. foreign assistance; however, such countries must be eligible to receive U.S. aid.

Quality of Project Idea (35 points)

Applications should be responsive to the NOFO, appropriate in the country/regional context, and should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the environmental areas of focus in the Project Description. EAP prioritizes innovative and creative approaches rather than projects that simply duplicate or add to efforts by other entities. This does not exclude from consideration projects that clearly build off existing successful projects in a new and innovative way. In countries where similar activities are already taking place, an explanation should be provided as to how new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing activities and how these efforts will be coordinated.

Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives (25 points)

A strong application will include a clear articulation of how the proposed project activities contribute to the overall project objectives, and each activity will be clearly developed and detailed. EAP encourages applicants to include a comprehensive monthly work plan which demonstrates substantive undertakings and the logistical capacity of the organization. Objectives should be ambitious, yet measurable, results-focused, and achievable in a reasonable time frame. Applications should address how the project will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners have been identified, EAP encourages applicants to submit letters of support from proposed in-country partners. Additionally, applicants should describe the division of labor among the direct applicant and any local partners. If applicable, applications should identify target areas for activities, target participant groups or selection criteria for participants, and the specific roles of sub-awardees, among other pertinent details. In particularly challenging operating environments, applications should include

contingency plans for overcoming potential difficulties in executing the original work plan and address any operational or programmatic security concerns and how they will be addressed.

Institution's Record and Capacity (15 points)

EAP will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Applications should demonstrate an institutional record of successful projects, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past grants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the project's objectives.

Cost Effectiveness (10 points)

EAP strongly encourages applicants to clearly demonstrate project cost-effectiveness in their application, including examples of leveraging institutional and other resources. However, cost-sharing or other examples of leveraging other resources is not required and does not need to be included in the budget. Inclusion in the budget does not result in additional points awarded during the review process. Budgets, however, should have low and/or reasonable overhead and administration costs and applicants should provide clear explanations and justifications for these costs in relation to the work involved. Each budget item should be clearly explained and justified to demonstrate its necessity, appropriateness, and its link to the project objectives.

Multiplier Effect/Sustainability (7 points)

Applications should clearly delineate how elements of the project will have a multiplier effect and be sustainable beyond the life of the grant. A good multiplier effect will have an impact beyond the direct beneficiaries of the grant (e.g., participants trained under a grant go on to train other people, workshop participants use skills from a workshop to enhance a national-level election that affects the entire populace). A strong sustainability plan may include demonstrating continuing impact beyond the life of a project or garnering other donor support after EAP funding ceases.

Project Monitoring and Evaluation (8 points)

Complete applications will include a detailed plan (both a narrative and table) of how the project's progress and impact will be monitored and evaluated throughout the project. Incorporating a well-designed monitoring and evaluation component into a project is one of the most efficient methods of documenting the progress and results (intended and unintended) of a project. Applications should demonstrate the capacity to provide objectives with measurable outputs and outcomes and engage in robust monitoring and assessment of project activities. The quality of the M&E plan will be judged on the narrative explaining how both monitoring and evaluation will be carried out and who will be responsible for those related activities.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

F.1 Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR Chapter 200 (Sub-Chapters A through F) shall apply to all non-Federal entities, except for assistance awards to Individuals and Foreign Public Entities (for more

information on these exceptions, see Chapters 5, Federal Assistance to Individuals, and 6, Federal Assistance to Foreign Public Entities Directive.) Sub-Chapters A through E shall apply to all foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all U.S. and foreign for-profit entities.

The applicant/recipient of the award and any sub-recipient under the award must comply with all applicable terms and conditions, in addition to the assurance and certifications made part of the Notice of Award. The Department's Standard Terms and Conditions can be viewed at <https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/Pages/TermsandConditions.aspx>

F.2 Federal Award Notices

EAP will provide a separate notification to applicants on the result of their applications. Successful applicants will receive an email requesting that the applicant respond to panel conditions and recommendations. This notification is not an authorization to begin activities and does not constitute formal approval or a funding commitment.

Final approval is contingent on the applicant successfully responding to the panel's conditions and recommendations, being registered in required systems, including the U.S. government's Payment Management System (PMS), unless an exemption is provided, and completing and providing any additional documentation requested by EAP or AQM. Final approval is also contingent on Congressional notification requirements being met and final review and approval by the Department's warranted grants officer.

The notice of Federal award signed by the Department's warranted grants officers is the sole authorizing document. If awarded, the notice of Federal award will be provided to the applicant's designated Authorizing Official electronically.

F.3 Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR Chapter 200 (Sub-Chapters A through F) shall apply to all non-Federal entities, except for assistance awards to Individuals and Foreign Public Entities (for more information on these exceptions, see Chapters 5, Federal Assistance to Individuals, and 6, Federal Assistance to Foreign Public Entities Directive.) Sub-Chapters A through E shall apply to all foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all U.S. and foreign for-profit entities.

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F.4 Reporting

Applicants should be aware that EAP awards will require financial and programmatic reporting on a quarterly or semi-annual basis. The Federal Financial Report (FFR or SF-425) is the

required form for the financial reports and must be submitted in the Payment Management System.

Narrative progress reports should reflect the focus on measuring the project's impact on the overarching objectives and should be compiled according to the objectives, outcomes, and outputs as outlined in the award's Scope of Work (SOW).

A final narrative and financial report must also be submitted within 90 days after the expiration of the award.

Please note: delays in reporting may result in delays of payment approvals and failure to provide required reports may jeopardize the recipients' ability to receive future U.S. government funds.

EAP reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial project information during the award period.

G. CONTACT INFORMATION

For technical submission questions related to this solicitation, please contact Garrett Barnicoat, BarnicoatGE@state.gov

For assistance with Grants.gov accounts and technical issues related to using the system, please call the Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov. The Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except [federal holidays](#).