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)
FY 2026 English Access Scholarship Program
Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017848
Application Deadline: May 1, 2026

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A. Basic Information

1. Overview.

Funding Opportunity Title	FY 2026 English Access Scholarship Program
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0017848
Announcement Type	New Cooperative Agreement
Deadline for Applications	Friday, May 1, 2026 11:59pm Eastern (Washington DC time)
Assistance Listing Number	19.421
Length of Performance Period	56 months

Number of Awards Anticipated	1 award
Award Amount Award Amounts	Approximately $12,477,500
Total Available Funding	$12,477,500, pending availability of funds
Type of Funding	FY 2026 Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs (ECE) Funds
Funding Instrument Type	Cooperative Agreement
Anticipated Award Date	August 1, 2026

This notice is subject to availability of funding. 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.

Pending satisfactory implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this award for two additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

2. Executive Summary.

The English Access Scholarship Program (Access) leverages American English to build English language capacity with strategic audiences through in-person programming and exchanges in the United States. The program promotes economic self-reliance which strengthens American national security and economic prosperity. Access showcases U.S. educational excellence, demonstrates U.S. educational technology, and promotes opportunities for American business partnerships.

3. Eligible Applicants.

The following organizations are eligible to apply:
- U.S. Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations
- U.S. Not-for-profit public and private educational institutions

Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

4. Cost Sharing.

There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this program.

5. Other Eligibility Requirements.

a. All organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid registration in SAM.gov. Please see *Section E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines* for more information.

b. 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 A. Basic Information*, ECA anticipates issuing one award, for approximately $12,477,500. Therefore, organizations must demonstrate four years of experience in conducting international exchanges in your proposal to be eligible to apply under this competition.

c. All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO and the PSI; not doing so may result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

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

e. 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.

f. Applicants who are current recipients of awards directly from ECA should make sure the application details one or more award that will be open with ECA at the start of the anticipated period of performance for this NOFO. Applicants who do not have current awards directly with ECA, please review the information in the PSI, section D, with additional information that must be provided in your application in order for it to be eligible.

B. Program Description

Access leverages American English to build English language capacity with strategic audiences. The program promotes economic self-reliance which stems illegal migration and strengthens American national security. Access also showcases U.S. educational excellence, demonstrates U.S. educational technology, and promotes opportunities for American business partnerships. Through scholarships, educational seminars, alumni engagement, and U.S. exchanges, the program demonstrates American values, supports model classrooms that influence national education systems, and highlights U.S. leadership and innovation through content focused on major U.S. milestones and events.

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.

2. Purpose.

Since 2004, the Access Program has trained approximately 200,000 youth and 20,000 teachers in over 80 countries. Through scholarships, educational seminars, and alumni engagement, Access strengthens participants' educational and economic prospects, enhances teachers' pedagogical skills, and cultivates a global network of alumni supportive of the United States.

The FY 2026 Access Program will support approximately 7,000 participants globally. Programming may be in-person, virtual, or hybrid and occur in-country, in the region, or in the United States. ECA anticipates that the majority of the award costs will be for program activities detailed across the three program components below.

Channeling U.S. expertise in English language education and education technology towards an expanded range of target audiences and critical industry fields, Access is comprised of:

- Access Scholarships: Designed to reach target audiences identified by U.S. embassies based on U.S. national interest including but not limited to emerging voices and established opinion leaders. This component provides participants a foundation of English language, leadership, and professional skills to be better equipped to pursue further education and employment in their home countries, with enhanced understanding of and connections to Americans and the United States. Historically, approximately 30- 40% of the total award costs will be utilized to support the Access Scholarships. Final participant numbers and funding levels will be determined in coordination with the Office of English Language Programs (ECA/A/L).
- Access Educational Seminars and Content Development: U.S. education experts conduct educational seminars abroad and in the United States for teachers, who learn best practices of American English teaching methodology and apply them in their own English language classrooms, shaping participants' understanding of the United States and fostering greater interest, partnerships, and favorability towards Americans and the United States. They also develop content focused on information about the United States, American principles, critical thinking, and service learning in addition to teaching methodology to highlight U.S. leadership, innovation, and achievements. Alumni teachers serve as role models and mentors to other English teachers, providing a multiplier effect in-country, and those trainees carry what they learn into their classrooms. In past years, ECA has seen demand for this component shift based on the needs of the field. Historically, approximately 30-35% of the total award costs will be utilized to support the Access Educational Seminars and Content Development. Final participant numbers and funding levels will be determined in coordination with ECA/A/L.
- Access Alumni: Alumni engagement helps maintain a global network of individuals who are supportive towards the United States. Both ECA and U.S. embassies connect with Access alumni (both former students and teachers) through opportunities to reinforce their strong association with their U.S. counterparts, the United States, each other, and their global network. Historically, approximately 5-10% of the total award costs will be utilized to support Access alumni programming. We encourage applicants to propose cost-efficient models for alumni engagement to advance the program's force

multiplier effect. Final participant numbers and funding levels will be determined in coordination with ECA/A/L.

3. Program Specific Guidelines.

Participants will be identified and/or selected by the U.S. embassies and consulates in participating countries. Final participant numbers will be determined by ECA/A/L. ECA/A/L will inform the recipient of the participating countries globally and the funding levels for each country.

U.S. embassies and consulates will also recommend the schools or other in-country educational service providers to conduct the classes and educational seminars with the final approval of ECA/A/L. Programming may be in-person, virtual or hybrid and occur in-country, in the region, or in the United States. (Note: Throughout this solicitation, these schools, NGOs, and other partners will be referred to as "in-country educational services providers.")

4. Recipient Responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the recipient organization include the following:

1. Program Management:
   a. Strategic Planning and Management: Collaborate with ECA/A/L on the overall management of all program components, including, but not limited to, scholarships, educational seminars, alumni programming, and U.S. exchanges. The recipient organization staff should attend at least two strategic planning meetings during the calendar year with the program office.
   b. Content Development: At the direction of ECA/A/L, develop Access content focused on U.S. culture such as America's 250th anniversary and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic and Paralympic Games, to include lesson plans focused on themes identified by the U.S. Embassy/Consulate, 21st century skills, information about the United States, and communicative English language teaching methodology, along with developing materials and resources based on Administration priorities. The recipient, with the assistance of experienced U.S. TESOL educators as needed, may identify, create, curate, moderate, and copy-edit learning resources and other training materials to be shared through in-person and virtual training

platforms, such as on the Access Teacher Community of Practice (CoP). Content should focus on information about the United States, American principles, critical thinking, and service learning in addition to teaching methodology to highlight U.S. leadership, innovation, and achievements through English instruction.

c. Documentation: Maintain official documentation for the entire lifecycle of the program, e.g., proposals, agreements, reports, monitoring documents, etc. The recipient will manage an existing open-source online information management system to track all documentation.

d. Program Systems and Lifecycle: Collaborate with ECA/A/L to design systems to manage the lifecycle of the program. Develop and maintain information management system(s) and CoP platform and ensure systems are customized for the Access program and meet the needs of and are accessible to all stakeholders. The online systems must be on an open-source platform.

e. Review/Oversight: Collect, review, provide feedback, and seek revisions to official program documentation, e.g., proposals, agreements, reports, monitoring documents, etc., from the in-country educational service providers on a schedule agreed to by the U.S. embassies and the providers. Send reminders when official program documentation is due and overdue. Use ECA/A/L guidance when reviewing all program documentation for compliance with criteria for successful programming. Raise concerns, highlight successes, and make recommendations to ECA/A/L.

f. Enhanced Monitoring: Provide enhanced monitoring of local scholarship programs in potentially 5-10 countries with a scholarship funding level of $350,000 or more to ensure proper accountability and compliance with program requirements and achievement of performance goals. Work with ECA/A/L to identify the appropriate countries and to approve the organizations and/or individuals who will conduct enhanced monitoring activities under this award. With concurrence of ECA/A/L, the recipient may hire (a) experienced U.S. TESOL educators to develop and conduct in-depth monitoring of Access programs in the field and coordinate all travel itineraries and arrangements.

g. Supplemental Programming: Support education in the United States and overseas for audiences as requested by ECA/A/L.

h. Staff Training: The recipient organization staff may use funding to attend trainings, conferences, etc. relevant to their work to ensure staff are up to

date on the latest developments. Trainings must be approved by the program office and be clearly attributed in the budget if an anticipated award activity.

i. Post-Funded Programs: The recipient will make administrative systems and templates available for U.S. Embassy funded programs to use.

2. Educational Seminars for Teachers and Administrators
   a. Assess the needs for resources and administrative support resources, including content, lesson plans, testing, and program materials. Provide low-cost resources with concurrence from ECA/A/L.
   b. In coordination with ECA/A/L, assess Access administrators' needs for training and develop resources and educational seminars. This includes, but is not limited to, educational seminars and resources for the program lifecycle, financial management, and systems adoption.
   c. The recipient may develop and conduct educational seminars for English language teaching and learning, coordinate and support the deployment of this educational seminar overseas, and design activities to allow educators to use the content most effectively abroad.
   d. The recipient will fund rapid response teacher and administrator educational seminars developed by Regional English Language Officers (RELOs) in the field for current and potential Access teachers and administrators and provide experienced U.S. TESOL educators, content, and training materials as appropriate.

3. Community of Practice (CoP)
   a. The recipient, or another entity such as a technology development organization identified through a competition, will develop, maintain, and update as necessary an online CoP for teachers, administrators, and U.S. embassy staff and may be expanded at the request of ECA/A/L to include students and alumni.
   b. The recipient will create an engaging, dynamic, user-friendly, and visually appealing online CoP where participants are encouraged to further their education, share resources and ideas, and cascade knowledge and skills gained during the Access program. The award recipient may also engage U.S. embassies and/or provide opportunities for all stakeholders to participate on the CoP.
   c. Develop and propose strategies for maximum engagement of all Access stakeholders and quality of user interface for the online CoP.

d. Ensure that the online CoP is mobile-friendly and easily accessible in low-bandwidth contexts.

e. The recipient may develop, with concurrence from ECA/A/L, virtual events that would align with themes identified by the relevant U.S. embassy/consulate; 21st century skills; information about the United States; and communicative English language instruction, for program participants. This may include, but is not limited to, purchasing appropriate video conferencing and social media software, recruiting and selecting professional guest speakers, registering participants, emailing certificates or digital badges, and providing sufficient staff to manage the relevant software, interact with participants, and act as moderators.

4. U.S. Exchange Component: The recipient may conduct virtual, in-person, or hybrid exchanges or may issue a sub-award(s) to another/other organization(s) through an open competition to U.S. public and private non-profit, non-governmental organizations, and accredited colleges and universities. Pending successful implementation of a U.S. exchange and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years and within the period of performance, the recipient organization may request and fund additional iterations of exchange program(s) with previously selected organization(s) as directed by ECA/A/L. The recipient organization will plan, conduct, and fund at least one U.S.-based exchange for potential participants as directed by ECA/A/L. The recipient will work with ECA/A/L to define program expectations, including duration and number of participants, and select the most appropriate sub-recipient unless the recipient implements the exchange. The U.S. exchange(s) may focus on providing participants with the most current teaching methods, exposure to relevant American educational technology, education policy, educational leadership, service learning, and education administration, in addition to promoting American culture. The exchange(s) may include an academic component on American history, society, and culture, as well as attendance at conferences related to the field of TESOL. The exchange(s) will promote the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic and Paralympic Games. The recipient will work with sub-recipients to provide all exchange materials to the program office. ECA/A/L will give final approval to make sure they meet Administration priorities.

a. In-person exchanges: The recipient will assume overall logistical responsibility for arrangements during participants' time in the United States, which includes, but is not limited to,

      i.   complying with J-visa regulations and communicating guidelines;

     ii.   preparing orientation materials and facilitating orientations;

    iii.   making international and domestic round-trip travel arrangements in compliance with the Fly America Act;

    iv.   assuming overall responsibility for compliance with all applicable taxes, withholdings, and reporting;

     v.   conducting performance monitoring, including administering surveys, questionnaires, and other quantitative and qualitative tools; and

    vi.   enrolling participants in the State Department's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) or other health benefit plan, as directed by the Bureau. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for further information.

  b. Virtual exchanges: The recipient will assume overall logistical responsibility for participants in the virtual U.S. exchanges, which includes, but is not limited to:

     i.   purchasing appropriate technical platforms, gathering nominations from U.S. embassies, emailing certificates or digital badges, and providing sufficient staff or experienced U.S. TESOL educators to interact with participants and act as moderators during the virtual events.

     ii.   building a ladder of leadership for participants to become mentors, including the development of self-paced modules. Using those mentors to support program participants in U.S. exchanges.

    iii.   managing and engaging all in-person and virtual U.S. exchange alumni through online platforms, creating content, etc. Piloting online educational opportunities with alumni when appropriate.

5. Administrative responsibilities
   a. Disbursement process: Establish processes for disbursing funds to in-country educational service providers worldwide based on compliance with all official documentation such as agreements, in coordination with the U.S. embassy. ECA/A/L will inform the recipient organization of the in-country educational service providers and their funding levels. The award recipient will work with U.S. embassies and in-country educational service providers to determine the most efficient means of disbursement.
   b. Disburse funds: Upon receipt of confirmation from the relevant U.S. embassy of appropriate monitoring, the recipient organization will disburse funding. The recipient will liaise with ECA/A/L regarding reports

requesting disbursements that do not correspond to the approved proposal or that do not have confirmation from the U.S. embassy.

c. Agreements: Enter into agreements with the in-country educational service providers. Terminate or suspend agreements with prior written approval from ECA/A/L and in coordination with the U.S. embassy.

d. Training: Develop training guides for all required documentation for across program types: scholarship, educational seminars, and alumni, based on guidance from ECA/A/L. Interactive online training may also be developed to guide all stakeholders through the program lifecycle. Provide training to appropriate stakeholders. Deliver trainings and technical assistance (virtual, in-person, or hybrid) for ECA/A/L and U.S. embassy staff on all program aspects.

e. Track disbursements: Track country funding and disbursements in an existing online program management system throughout the length of the cooperative agreement and provide regular budget updates to ECA/A/L.

f. Program processes: Streamline program processes and work closely with the program office to identify challenges and solutions; capture trending issues; and help establish local program monitoring and other programmatic analyses.

g. Audits: The recipient may procure auditing services to conduct an audit of at least one local Access program if funding is available within the award and with concurrence from the program office.

h. Shipment of books and materials: The recipient may purchase and ship books and materials to the providers in the field as directed by ECA/A/L.

i. Publications: Draft and clear all public advertisements, newsletters, and websites with ECA/A/L before development and dissemination to ensure proper identification with the U.S. Department of State. Subscribe to any necessary tools and resources for production of digital and print resources.

j. Branding: All materials and communications created for this program must be branded as a U.S. Department of State program (see Standard Department of State Terms & Conditions).

5. 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://www.state.gov/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/.

The proposal must 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 v and **Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)** (See the MODE Resource Guide – https://app.box.com/s/qjo8icwj46tc8h1i1qtg80zl7ibwgtua – found on our website https://www.state.gov/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/)
- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
  o Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities
    ▪ E1.1.01: Percent of participants reporting that their program experience offered opportunities to engage with other cultures (U.S. Exchanges only)
    ▪ E1.1.04: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government (core indicator) (U.S. Exchanges only)
    ▪ E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator) (U.S. Exchanges only)
    ▪ E1.1.10: Percent of foreign participants who traveled to the United States for the first time during their program (core indicator) (U.S. Exchanges only)
    ▪ E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American people (core indicator) (U.S. Exchanges only)

- E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator) (U.S. Exchanges only)
- E1.1.19: Percent of foreign participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator) (U.S. Exchanges only)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries
  - 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) (U.S. Exchanges only)
- 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) (U.S. Exchanges only)
    - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator) (U.S. Exchanges only)
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries
    - E4.0.01: Percent of participants reporting increases in their job skills as a result of their program participation (U.S. Exchanges only)
    - E4.0.09: Percent of participants reporting an increase in language skills as a result of their program participation (U.S. Exchanges only)
  - 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)
    - E4.1.06: Number of participants in programs with formal, dedicated language learning activities
    - E4.1.07: Number of instruction methodology trainings implemented
- 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) (U.S. Exchanges only)

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; there is also a support video available for more information on how to fill out the PMP: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBHC1oLNZvI. 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. 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). In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the MODE Framework 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; 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.
  - o 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.
  - o 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).
  - o 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 outcomes 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.

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

Proposals should include information within the program narrative section(s) 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://app.box.com/s/pn6tavyg7sh064i502fzap49ox63y38a), 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.

Nonmandatory Use of the Qualtrics MODE Survey Builder Data Collection System

ECA has created a guided tool (the MODE Survey Builder) within the Qualtrics survey platform for ECA implementing partners to generate surveys to facilitate the seamless collection and reporting of MODE Framework data. The MODE Survey Builder offers implementing partners a guided workflow that will generate a ready-to-send MODE survey, allows the addition of custom survey questions, and offers a standard report template for a quick overview of survey results that can be

submitted in MyGrants (see section below) to fulfill RPM Reporting Requirements. Use of the Qualtrics survey platform can be utilized at no cost to implementing partners. Additional information about the MODE Survey Builder can be found here: https://app.box.com/s/jjr98hmx6deorxj3lwgaxjrwdfec2r91 and here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jus4fRqOTcM. You can propose use of an alternate survey tool or use the MODE Survey Builder, but if you are utilizing the MODE Survey Builder, you must indicate such in your proposal.

MyGrants RPM Reporting Requirements

MyGrants 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 MyGrants 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 MyGrants RPM. The data stored in the MyGrants 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.

6. **Allowable Costs.**
   a. Costs associated with a local institution's activities including, but not limited to, instruction, materials, venue rental, accommodations, transportation, and meals as well as devices and data plans for virtual learning.
   b. Costs associated with planning, conducting, and funding for virtual, in-person, or hybrid exchanges in the United States for selected teachers, directors, administrators, and ministry officials. Costs for in-person exchanges should at minimum include: the participants' international and domestic transportation, U.S. per diem, space rental, workshop materials, participants' pre–departure costs such as visa costs, necessary travel to obtain visas, etc.
   c. Contracting experienced U.S. TESOL educators.
   d. Procurement of appropriate software, technology platforms, and subscriptions for digital services.
   e. Overhead and Staffing Costs:
      a. Staff salaries and benefits (each staff member and his/her position must be listed separately). Please also note the percentage of his/her total time spent on this program;

    b. Communication costs (e.g. fax, telephone, postage, communication equipment, etc.);

    c. Office supplies;

    d. Printing and duplication costs;

    e. OMB Guidance 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F Single Audit fees;

    f. Other direct costs; and

    g. Indirect costs.

    h. Reasonable accommodation to ensure the program's accessibility.

Please refer to the PSI for additional budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

7. Cost Share.

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.

8. Freedom and Democracy Guidelines.

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," the Bureau "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.

9. 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. 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.

10.   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.

11. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial.
ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as "Freedom 250" – 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 Freedom 250. Any Freedom 250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided Freedom 250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

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

ECA/A/L activities and responsibilities for the Access Program include:

1. Provide overall strategic direction on the goals and priorities for all components of the program and guidance on its implementation, including, the planning, development, and design of all local Access programs and U.S. exchanges.
2. Define requirements for funding submitted by U.S. embassies and their proposed distribution of funding among program components. Determine funding levels.
3. Approve, based on input from U.S. embassies, RELOs, and the State Department's Regional Bureaus, the proposals from RELOs, posts, and in-country educational service providers (schools, NGOs, etc.) that will provide English language instruction, U.S. cultural content, and leadership development to the Access participants, programming for alumni, and educational seminars for potential participants.
4. Determine, based on input from U.S. embassies, the amount and timing of financial disbursements by the recipient to the in-country educational service providers.
5. Serve as the primary point of contact for the recipient and intermediary with the U.S. embassies.
6. Collaborate with the recipient on the development of program materials, including content, lesson plans, assessments, etc. Provide final approval for all recipient materials.
7. Collaborate with the recipient to design systems to manage the lifecycle of the program and an online platform to engage stakeholders.

U.S. embassies' activities and responsibilities for the Access Program include:
1. Develop an application for funding in collaboration with the relevant RELO, including risk mitigation, for the Access program in their country. Submit the application to the RELO for review and ECA/A/L for approval. Select the in-country educational service provider(s) that will provide a) English language instruction, U.S. cultural content, and leadership development to the Access scholarship participants; b) programming for alumni; and/or c) educational seminars for potential participants. In countries with multiple providers, U.S. embassies may choose to work with an organization that oversees the work of other providers.
2. Develop the program in collaboration with the in-country educational service provider, RELO, and ECA/A/L.
3. Serve as the primary point of contact between the recipient and the in-country educational service providers. Determine the level of funding for each in-country educational service provider within their ECA-approved country

funding levels. Review and provide U.S. embassy approval of proposals, official documentation, and reports submitted by in-country educational service providers for all programming under this cooperative agreement.
4. Collaborate with in-country educational service providers on the participant selection process and approve the selection of all students and teachers. Participate in activities for Access students, when possible. Propose participants for the U.S. exchanges to ECA/A/L.
5. Collaborate with in-country educational service providers in developing appropriate materials, content, and service-learning projects that are identified by the U.S. embassy.
6. Monitor and assess the performance of the in-country educational service providers, including conducting monitoring visits to each in-country educational service provider during the Access scholarship program. Submit monitoring reports into the recipient's data management system. Alert the recipient and ECA/A/L of any deficiencies or corrective actions required.
7. Conduct regular review of the in-country educational service providers' programs and accounts and assess the program's significance. In those countries where the recipient provides enhanced monitoring, review and approve all reports from the monitoring organization or subject matter experts and respond to and oversee the implementation of any Corrective Action Plans (CAP).

In-country educational services providers' activities and responsibilities for the Access Program include:
1. Plan and prepare programming in close consultation with the U.S. embassy and RELO.
2. Draft proposals that meet program requirements and submit to the U.S. embassy, RELO, the recipient, and ECA/A/L.
3. Implement the program according to the written guidelines from the U.S. embassy, approved proposals, and signed official documents.
4. Advertise the programs and recruit participants. Collaborate with the U.S. embassy during the student and teacher selection process.
5. Nominate potential participants for opportunities and U.S. exchanges in coordination with the U.S. embassy, RELO, ECA/A/L, and the recipient.
6. Regularly monitor the program to ensure that it is implemented in accordance with the relevant official documents such as the agreement, to highlight student and teacher achievements and best practices, and to address challenges quickly.

7. Provide regular updates to the U.S. embassy on the program schedule, send invitations to the U.S. embassy about special events, and provide opportunities for U.S. embassy personnel to visit and speak with Access students, teachers, and other in-country educational service provider staff.
8. Submit timely written and financial reports as well as alumni data according to the schedule outlined in official documentation to the recipient and when requested by the U.S. embassy.

C. Application Contents and Format

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals.

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which contains guidelines for proposal preparation.

1. Budget Format.
Applicants must submit a budget (SF-424A), detailed line-item budget, and a budget narrative. See the PSI section III for more information on the budget requirements. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

2. Content of Application.
Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for information about the application and formatting guidelines.

D. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. Address to Request Application Package.
The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Grants.gov website at https://www.grants.gov or from the ECA website at https://www.state.gov/eca-grant-opportunities/.

2. Department of State Contacts
For questions about this announcement, contact: Melissa Fernandez, U.S. Department of State, Office of English Language Programs, ECA/A/L, 771-204-6017, accessprogram@state.gov

All correspondence with ECA concerning this solicitation 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 deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

The terms and conditions published in this solicitation are binding and may not be modified by any ECA representative. Explanatory information provided by ECA that contradicts published language will not be binding.

3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM.gov).

Required Registrations
All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from this NOFO.

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

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

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

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 are 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://sam.gov/content/entity-registration

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

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

4. Required Registration with MyGrants.
All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's MyGrants system by accessing https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com and clicking the "create an account" link. MyGrants 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 MyGrants 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/.

5. Submission Instructions.

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.

Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures

Eligible organizations should follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (https://www.grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants.

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/applicants/applicant-registration

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/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants

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

6. Submission Dates and Times.

Application Deadline Date
Friday, May 1, 2026 11:59pm Eastern (Washington DC time)

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. <u>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.</u>

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you begin the submission process through Grants.gov well in advance of the application deadline.

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 Grants.gov 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 the Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting https://grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal (https://www.grants.gov) **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.**

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

   b. **Prohibition on Funding Activities that Encourage Mass-Migration Caravans towards the United States Southwest Border.**
      None of the funds awarded under this grant may be made available to encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass-migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. Funds may not be made available for legal counseling on the United States asylum process; and/or for referrals to legal or representation in the United States.

      Funds may only be used for cash cards for use in the country in which they are provided or to facilitate assisted voluntary returns and other purposes that do not encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. The provision of humanitarian assistance is permitted.

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

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact Melissa Fernandez, 771-204-6017, accessprogram@state.gov for additional information.

d. **Certification Regarding Compliance with Applicable Federal Anti-Discrimination Laws**
If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this NOFO will be within the United States, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:

1) Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code and;

2) It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

e. **Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and Any Other Applicable Foreign Funding Disclosure Requirements for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE).**
Applicants are advised that IHEs must certify the following at the time of award, and that this certification requirement must be included in any subaward agreements to IHEs:

- Its compliance in all respects with section 1011f of title 20, United States Code, and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements is material for purposes of section 3729 of title 31, United States Code, and for receipt of appropriate Federal grant funds.

f. **Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan**
For grants and cooperative agreements under which the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds $500,000 include the following
Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award <u>for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds $500,000</u>:

- To the best of the recipient's knowledge, neither the recipient, nor any subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor of the recipient or any agent of the recipient or of such a subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor, is engaged in any of the activities described in <u>2 CFR 175(a)</u>;

  The recipient has implemented a Trafficking in Persons compliance plan to prevent activities described in <u>2 CFR 175(a)</u> and is compliant with it; and compliance plan must be consistent with the requirements of <u>2 CFR 175(b)(4) and (5)</u>.

- That the recipient has procedures to prevent activities described in <u>2 CFR 175(a)</u> and to monitor, detect, and terminate any subrecipient, contractor, subcontractor, or employee of the recipient engaging in them.

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

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

(a) *Definitions.*

American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity means an entity included on a list developed and maintained by the Federal Acquisition Security Council (FASC) and published in the System for Award Management (SAM) at https://www.sam.gov

FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system means an unmanned aircraft system manufactured or assembled by an American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity.

Unmanned aircraft means an aircraft that is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft .

Unmanned aircraft system means an unmanned aircraft and associated elements (including communication links and the components that control the unmanned aircraft) that are required for the operator to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system.

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

(1) delivering any FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system, which includes unmanned aircraft (i.e., drones) and associated elements;

(2) Operating a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system in the performance of the award; and

(3) Using Federal funds for the purchase or operation of a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system .

c) *Exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.*
The prohibitions described above will not apply if the agency determines that an exemption, exception, or waiver applies and the award indicates that such a determination has been made. [See sections 1823 through 1825 and 1832 of Public Law 118-31 (41 U.S.C. 3901 note prec.) for statutory requirements pertaining to exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.].

8. Other Submission Requirements.

a. Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov.

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

c. 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, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Applicants should also identify what proportion of their time will be used in support of the program. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions.

d. Intergovernmental Review of Applications
Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. Application Review Information

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. Applications may also 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.

Proposals recommended by an ECA grant panel 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.

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 review.

a. **Quality of the program idea, program planning, and ability to achieve program aims and purpose:** Proposals should be original, well-defined, and

relevant to ECA's mission. Proposals should have a detailed agenda and work plan that demonstrates your institution's ability to carry out the program. The plan should follow the program guidelines described in this solicitation and should be likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results. Proposals should clearly state the program's aims and purpose and demonstrate how your institution will meet them.

b. **Institutional Capacity and institution's record/ability:** Proposals should include the necessary personnel and institutional resources to achieve the program results. The organization has expertise in exchange programs and the proposal demonstrates it has internal controls in place to manage federal funds. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs and responsible fiscal management. ECA will consider the past performance of prior ECA recipients, including the timely submission of reports, and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

c. **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.

d. **Cost-effectiveness and 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.

3. Indirect Costs.

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

4. Risk Review.

Under the merit review as required by 2 CFR 200.206, prior to making a Federal Award, the Department will review and consider the following risk factors:

a. Financial stability
b. Management systems and standards
c. History of performance
d. Audit reports and findings
e. Ability to effectively implement requirements

5. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov.

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) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313)

An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available at SAM.gov.

Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 CFR 200.206, the Department will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

F. Award Notices.

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal ECA procedures. The award or cooperative agreement will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer in ECA's Grants Division and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer (as identified in the application) for review and countersignature. The recipient may only start incurring project expenses beginning on the start date shown on the fully signed award document.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding.

Unsuccessful applicants:

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.

Payment Method:

Payments under this award will be made through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS).

G. Post-Award Requirements and Administration.

1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

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

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

- Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
  - o Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
  - o Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
  - o Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
  - o Terminating agreements pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340). For the avoidance of doubt, the Department has sole discretion over the determination that an award no longer effectuates program goals or agency priorities, and this provision

permits awards to be terminated at the Department's convenience, including when it determines that the award no longer advances the national interest.

- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT

- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION

- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)

- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY

- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS

- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Recipients must comply with all applicable Executive Orders A searchable list can be found in the Federal Register: https://www.federalregister.gov/

2. Reporting

Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The FAA 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:

a. **Performance Progress Reports (PPRs)** shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual, quarterly, or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. All reports and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this award in MyGrants.

b. The **Federal Financial Reports** (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: https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/post-award-reporting-forms. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the recipient must upload the approved report to MyGrants, in

the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the recipient's eligibility for future awards.

   c. Required **MODE data** (see Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation section) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. MODE data reporting shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. The frequency of these reports will be determined by ECA/P/MELI and the Program Officer. Either a standard report template (if using the MODE Survey Builder) or aggregate data and the raw data file (if Recipient uses their own survey platform) must be uploaded by the Recipient as an RPM Performance Report under the corresponding record for this award in MyGrants.

   d. A **final program and financial report** no more than 120 days after the period of performance of the award ends or termination of the award.

   e. **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.

Applicants should be aware of the post award reporting requirements reflected in 2 CFR 200 Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

3. Branding and Marking

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

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

For more information, visit: https://brand.america.gov/

H. Other Information

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 <u>http://j1visa.state.gov</u> 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