



## **Statement of Interest (SOI)**

### **Feed the Future Innovation Labs**

#### **Amendment 1**

Department of State  
Opportunity number: DFOP0017826  
Concept Note Application deadline: April 9, 2026

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**U.S Department of State  
Office of Global Food Security  
Call for Statements of Interest**

**A. Basic Information**

***1. Background and Overview***

The Office of Global Food Security of the U.S. Department of State announces an open competition for organizations to submit a statement of interest (SOI) to serve as a Management Entity to design, host, and lead a Feed the Future Innovation Lab (FtF Innovation Lab).

U.S. investments in agricultural research through the FtF Innovation Labs benefit the world's poorest regions while also providing major benefits in the United States. America First investments in agriculture and food security are intended to directly benefit American safety, strength, and prosperity, especially in our own hemisphere. Simultaneously, the FtF Innovation Labs are structured to advance progress toward poverty reduction and hunger by developing innovative solutions that address the root causes of poverty and hunger. The United States values the ability to drive and shape agricultural research priorities, in part through its investments in programs such as the FtF Innovation Labs. Investments in U.S. university-led agricultural research, including the FtF Innovation Labs, have had an outsized positive impact on the American agricultural sector, foreign policy priorities, and economic prosperity. Over the past 40 years, our \$1.2 billion investment in U.S. university-led international agricultural research led to the equivalent of over \$8.4 billion in economic returns -- \$8 of impact for every \$1 dollar invested.<sup>1</sup>

The FtF Innovation Labs will advance solutions to reduce global hunger, poverty, and malnutrition, both at home and abroad, including in response to shocks and stresses to food and nutrition security. Agricultural research underpins food supply stability, food security, and food affordability both in the United States and in developing countries.<sup>2</sup> This call for Statements of Interest recognizes the

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<sup>1</sup> Dalton, Timothy J., and Keith Fuglie. "Costs, benefits, and welfare implications of USAID investment in agricultural research through US universities." *Journal of agricultural and applied economics* 54, no. 3 (2022): 461-479.

<sup>2</sup> Pardey, Philip G.; Chan-Kang, Connie; Stads, Gert-Jan; Chai, Yuan; Alston, Julian M.; Greyling, Jan; Muñoz, Hernán (2025) Food will be more affordable — if we double funds for agriculture research now. *Nature*, 648 (8093). doi:10.1038/d41586-025-03970-0

importance of U.S. scientific leadership in protecting the global food supply through American excellence in agricultural research and development (R&D).

FtF Innovation Labs leverage the advanced capacities of U.S. land-grant institutions to address challenges facing agriculture globally. By supporting healthy innovation pipeline development, the FtF Innovation Lab investments buffer against rising global food prices by increasing food availability, reducing consumer prices, and lowering production costs for farmers in the U.S. and around the world.

New America First FtF Innovation Lab investments are aligned with the policy priorities of the U.S. Department of State, by:

Making America Safer: Protecting Americans by preventing agricultural threats (including pest and disease outbreaks), especially in our hemisphere, from reaching U.S. shores or U.S. production systems, enhancing the safety and reliability of imported food, and by minimizing instability that can result from chronic food insecurity.

- Technologies developed with U.S. support enhance global agricultural productivity, reduce the impact of weather events, and combat pests and diseases--keeping food and agriculture safe at home and abroad.
- Research enhances food quality, safety, and availability. FtF Innovation Lab research can improve the safety and reliability of imported foods (coffee, cocoa, spices, fruits) for U.S. consumers, lowering costs and increasing choices for Americans.
- Global agricultural research contributes to U.S. national security by reducing migration pressures that stem from economic and food insecurity. By bolstering food security in regions prone to scarcity, FtF Innovation Labs can mitigate underlying drivers of conflict, like economic grievances and resource competition.

Making America Stronger: Strengthening bilateral relationships, building trust and cooperation, highlighting the quality and skills of U.S. universities, promoting resiliency in benefitting countries, and countering adversaries and malign actors, especially in **the Western** hemisphere.

- FtF Innovation Labs draw on expertise at the top U.S. universities to tackle some of the world's greatest challenges in agriculture and food security, strengthening U.S. research capacity and demonstrating the quality and skills of US Land Grant institutions globally.
- Long-term research partnerships build institutional trust and cooperation,

- which are critical during global crises (e.g. pandemics, weather-related shocks).
- FtF Innovation lab research can build the capacity of research institutions, agricultural sectors, and food systems around the world, better equipping other governments with the tools they need to feed their own populations.

Making America More Prosperous: Preventing costly agricultural threats, enhancing global production, reducing the need for humanitarian food assistance, and promoting American innovations globally.

- Procurement of supplies and inputs from U.S. companies enhances U.S. agriculture and facilitates market entry for American innovations in emerging markets.
- Private sector interests benefit through an expanded customer base and a strong pipeline of innovation that meets farmers demands.
- Research on improved farming methods, input use efficiency, and storage loss reduction advancements can save US farmers money.
- Improving agricultural productivity and reducing the frequency of shocks in areas prone to food insecurity can lessen the need for frequent and costly humanitarian food assistance.

The U.S. Department of State recognizes the importance of research in enabling the global food system to increase agricultural yields and productivity, build resilience to shocks, meet nutritional needs, reduce food loss and waste, improve diets, improve food safety, and holistically manage risk for people, food, and agricultural systems.

The submission of the SOI is the first step of a two-step process. Applicants are invited to submit a concise (maximum of 8-page) Statement of Interest (SOI) that clearly communicates project ideas, objectives and approach. This is not a full proposal, and this phase will not result in a federal assistance award. Rather, the SOI process allows applicants to submit project ideas for evaluation prior to the development of a full application.

Upon a merit review of eligible SOIs, a subset of selected applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will go through a merit review before final funding decision(s) are made. Invitation to submit a full proposal is not a commitment to funding. Issuance of this SOI opportunity does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of

comments/suggestions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

<b>Funding Opportunity Title</b>	Feed the Future Innovation Lab
<b>Funding Opportunity Number</b>	DFOP0017826
<b>Announcement Type</b>	Initial
<b>Deadline for Applications</b>	April 9, 2026 11:59pm EST
<b>Assistance Listing Number</b>	19.017 Environmental and Scientific Partnerships and Programs
<b>Length of performance period</b>	Up to 60 months
<b>Number of awards anticipated</b>	5-7 awards (approximate)
<b>Award amounts</b>	Individual awards may range from a minimum of \$20 million to a maximum of \$40 million (approximately) over the life of the award.
<b>Total available funding</b>	\$64 million total in FY 2026 (with outyear funding subject to the availability of funds)
<b>Type of Funding</b>	Development Assistance funds under the Foreign Assistance Act
<b>Anticipated project start date</b>	No later than September 30, 2026

**Funding Instrument Type:** Grant or Cooperative Agreement

**Award Performance Period:** Proposed projects should be completed in 60 months or less.

The Department of State will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

**This notice is subject to availability of funding.**

## ***2. Executive Summary***

America First investments in agricultural research through the FtF Innovation Labs

benefit the world's poorest regions while also providing major benefits to the United States. The Department of State invites eligible applicants to advance global food security in alignment with U.S. policy through targeted research that meets one or both of the following core objectives:

- 1) Advances agricultural science and research to increase productivity, mitigate threats to production systems, and support food systems to reduce hunger and malnutrition through enhanced supply of nutritious and safe foods; and/or
- 2) Increases demand for individual and household consumption of nutritious, safe foods as part of healthy diets, and improves market pathways and opportunities for government and private sector actors to promote consumption of nutritious and safe foods.

The Management Entity of each respective FtF Innovation Lab is expected to help implement and communicate impact pathways from research to development outcomes via partnerships with other USG programs, national partners, private companies, community-based organizations, such as faith-based organizations, and other donors and their programs. Programs must ensure U.S. investments directly benefit American safety, strength, and prosperity. Proposals should clearly address how the research activities will support both global food security and U.S. national security and economic interests, reduce the need for repeated humanitarian assistance, expand market access for U.S. companies, and protect the U.S. agriculture industry.

## **B. Eligibility**

### ***1. Eligible Applicants***

Eligibility is restricted. The eligibility requirements below apply only to the applicant of each concept note/proposal.

Applications must only be submitted by eligible U.S. colleges and universities as defined under Section 296(d) of Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended (22 U.S.C. 2220a(d)): "... those colleges or universities in each State, territory, or possession of the United States, or the District of Columbia, now receiving, or which must hereafter receive, benefits under the Act of July 2, 1862 (known as the First Morrill Act) or the Act of August 30, 1890 (known as the Second Morrill Act), which are commonly known as 'land-grant' universities; institutions now designated or which must hereafter be designated as sea-grant colleges under the Act of October 5, 1966 (known as the National Sea Grant

College and Program Act), which are commonly known as sea-grant colleges; Native American land-grant colleges as authorized under the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 301 note); and other United States colleges and universities which— (1) have demonstrable capacity in teaching, research, and extension (including outreach) activities in the agricultural sciences; and (2) can contribute effectively to the attainment of the objectives of this title.”

The Title XII university-led Feed the Future Innovation Lab programs involve multiple partners, principal of which are U.S. universities, working in collaboration with scientists in developing country universities, national and international research centers, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to jointly pursue scientific investigations to overcome critical agricultural constraints facing today’s global food systems.

All types of U.S. and non-U.S. entities are eligible as collaborating partners (i.e. sub-recipients or contractors at various tiers) of the applicant, provided that they are not excluded from U.S. Government acquisition and assistance awards (this may be verified through SAM.gov).

In preparing the application, it is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that no individuals or organizations proposed for participation in the program are excluded by the U.S. Government. After award, it is the Recipient’s responsibility to ensure that no transactions are conducted with excluded parties.

## ***2. Cost Sharing or Matching***

Cost sharing or matching is not required. While applicants may propose cost share or matching, cost-sharing/matching will not be evaluated as part of the merit review process. Opportunities for cost sharing and matching may be discussed during negotiation, if applicable. Per 2 CFR §200.306, items that are proposed for cost share must be allowable per 2 CFR §200, Subpart E—Costs Principles.

## ***3. Other Eligibility Requirements***

All organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid and active registration in SAM.gov. Please see Section E.3 for more information.

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) ([www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)) and/or has a current debt to the U.S. government 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

Part 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR Part 1989 Comp., p. 235), “Debarment and Suspension.” Additionally, no entity or person listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov to ensure that no ineligible entity or person is included in their application.

Applicants may submit up to *two* (2) applications as the Management Entity (ME).

Note: Coordination with other eligible applicants and use of a consortia approach is acceptable. In addition to applying as a Management Entity, an organization may partner as a sub awardee under other eligible applications.

## **C. Program Description**

### **1. Objectives and Areas of Inquiry**

The Global Food Security Act (GFSA) recognizes the critical role that research plays in achieving U.S. Global Food Security and nutrition goals, and mandates that the U.S. government “harness science, technology, and innovation, including the research and extension activities supported by relevant federal departments and agencies, including state partners, and Feed the Future Innovation Labs”. In particular, the GFSA defines FtF Innovation Labs as “research partnerships led by United States universities that advance solutions to reduce global hunger, poverty, and malnutrition including in response to shocks and stresses to food and nutrition security”. This activity also reflects support of work with universities on global research as provided in the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) section 296(a).

Section 103A of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA), as amended, requires that agricultural research carried out under the Act ...*shall (1) take account of the special needs of small farmers in the determination of research priorities, (2) include research on the interrelationships among technology, institutions, and economic, social, environmental, and cultural factors affecting small-farm agriculture, and (3) make extensive use of field testing to adapt basic research to local conditions.* Research programs proposed under this SOI should not reflect a quest for fundamental knowledge and improvement of scientific theories, nor a straightforward delivery of goods and services. Rather, this is a unique enterprise requiring rigor, discipline, awareness of local context, and building relationships with global actors to develop and apply innovations that impact global food security. This research is expected to generate knowledge and new or improved

technologies and practices, while also building linkages to partners and activities that can transfer information and innovation into the hands of stakeholders, where impacts may be achieved. The agricultural research investments supported under this SOI should be considered “impact pathways,” which map out connections between research outputs and development actors and outcomes that directly relate to one or more of the objectives below.

The overarching objectives and areas of inquiry of the program will benefit the American people and the people in the countries in which we provide assistance:

- **Objective 1: Advance agricultural science and research to increase productivity, mitigate threats to production systems, and support food systems to reduce hunger and malnutrition through enhanced supply of nutritious and safe foods.**
  - **Area of Inquiry 1.1 Agricultural Systems and Sustainable Intensification of Production:** This area of inquiry might include measures to sustainably improve soil health and fertility; and soil and water use management; improving input use efficiency; expanding improved mechanization and sustainable intensification approaches; reducing pre- and post-harvest losses; improving the nutritional value and contribution of crops; breeding activities leading to resilient crop varieties along with tools, technologies and/or methods to enhance resilience to crop threats; exploring optimal crop and farming system design for production, income and efficiency; and preventing, managing, and controlling threats from weather-related shocks such as droughts, floods, pests and pathogens.
  - **Area of Inquiry 1.2 Livestock and Animal Health:** This area of inquiry might include breeding activities for improved livestock health and productivity, innovative feeding strategies, productivity gains and improved production techniques in aquaculture, enhanced approaches and technologies to animal health, identification of threats and control challenges of pests and pathogens, enhanced and context-specific vaccine delivery methodologies.
- **Objective 2: Increase demand and improve market pathways to increase uptake of nutritious and safe foods for individuals, households, governments, and the private sector.**

- **Area of Inquiry 2.1 Nutrition, Food Systems and Food Safety:**  
This area of inquiry may include improving breeding activities for: improving the delivery of nutritious products through supply chains; reducing food loss and waste across the value chain; food processing and preservation techniques; off- and on-farm value addition; enhancing the nutritional value and benefit of and from crops and food products; improving food safety; identifying alternative uses for unusable and by-products; and improving financing and incentives for off-farm activities and businesses.

The new FtF Innovation Labs will continue to leverage the comparative advantages of the U.S. university community and its public and private-sector partners and will conduct research and development within the Areas of Inquiry. Additionally, the description of the areas of inquiry are illustrative and may not include topics that reasonably fit within the area of inquiry. Applicants may suggest topics that fit within the area of inquiry that are not listed.

## **2. Key Issues and Approaches across Objectives**

FtF Innovation Lab research and activities should incorporate key themes to ensure successful outcomes for both food security and agriculture. These themes should be considered in program design. These include but are not limited to:

- **Enhanced availability and uptake of improved technologies and practices:** FtF Innovation Labs may focus on deeper analysis of scaling pathways, or they may prioritize research leading to innovation. Innovation research should consider various drivers of and constraints to the scalability of new and improved technologies and practices, including necessary capacity development, sustained financing, and demand for new technologies.
- **Private sector engagement:** Partnerships with U.S., international, regional, and local businesses should be considered to transform research into marketable technologies with viable business models. This may include the development of public/private sector partnerships. Private sector partnerships should be encouraged as components of scaling innovation delivery and enhancing market development, as relevant.
- **Leveraging cutting-edge American technology and innovation:** Use of a range of innovations and advances, including Artificial Intelligence and digital solutions, can improve the efficiency of agricultural inputs, responses to productivity threats, market access, countering of malign actors, and access to data and information for farmers' timely responses and improved

decision-making.

- **Mitigation of production risks and vulnerabilities that contribute to humanitarian food security crises:** Innovations and approaches to enhance productivity in geographies prone to humanitarian food security crises can reduce the cost of long-term reliance on foreign assistance by focusing on technologies, practices, and approaches to enhance productivity in disaster-prone contexts.
- **Coordination and collaboration with the global agricultural research community,** including global research institutions and local universities, to minimize duplication of efforts, enhance leveraging of capacity and resources for maximum impact, achieving buy-in from practitioners, achieving scale, and crowding in resources.
- **Embedding a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework** into activities to assess the impacts and effectiveness of programs, inform future U.S. policy and programming decisions, and a clear plan to share knowledge and findings.

### 3. Priority Regions

Geographic target areas should reflect activities and partnerships in low- to middle-income countries<sup>3</sup> and showcase a strategic approach that unites key elements for impact. For example, geographic targets might be selected for a strategic approach by crop, commodity or farming system, innovation delivery approach or partner network to maximize impact. The concept note should indicate which countries will be targeted for activities and elaborate on the prioritization of those locations.

The following considerations should inform geographic targeting:

- **Alignment with foreign policy goals of the United States,** including those articulated in the [National Security Strategy](#), and the [Department of State's Agency Strategic Plan 2026-2030](#).
- **Opportunities to promote trade, cooperation, and investment** in countries of importance in international strategic competition and to expand market access for American companies abroad.
- **Ability to reduce requirements for foreign aid** in countries with large, frequent, and/or protracted caseloads of emergency food assistance.

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<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this solicitation, country income classifications are defined by the World Bank using the GNI per capita (Atlas method) -- see <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>. Therefore, "low- to middle-income countries refers to: low-income, lower-middle income, and upper-middle income countries.

## 4. Substantial Involvement

Areas of substantial involvement include but are not limited to the following:

- **Joint Programmatic Decisions:** The Department of State and the recipient collaborate on key programmatic decisions. This can include (but is not limited to) determining when certain phases of the project can start, approving staffing selections of key roles, final method of delivery or implementation, selections following assessments, etc.
- **Technical Assistance and Guidance:** The Department of State provides ongoing technical assistance and guidance integral to the project's execution, which if not followed, would undermine the goals and objectives of the award or otherwise make the award unsuccessful.

## D. Application Contents and Format

### 1. *Phase 1 – Statement of Interest (SOI)*

Please follow all instructions below carefully. SOIs that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the submission requirements will be deemed technically ineligible and will not move forward to the Merit Panel Review (MRP). Each SOI may be responsive to either a single or multiple objectives and areas of inquiry. Contents of SOI must include the following required information:

#### a. **Table Listing of Critical Details:**

- I. Proposed Project Title
- II. Name of the Organization
- III. Objective(s) to which the SOI is responding
- IV. Area(s) of Inquiry to which the SOI is responding
- V. Target Benefiting Country or Countries
- VI. Total Federal Share Requested
- VII. Total Cost Share (as applicable)
- VIII. Project Length

b. **Issue/Challenge/Opportunity:** Briefly describe the problem(s), issue(s), challenge(s), or opportunity(ies) the applicant is seeking to address.

c. **Proposed Solution/Activities:** Describe the approach and core activities to address the issue/challenge/opportunity. This should provide the Applicant's overall vision and approach for implementing a global research program

that includes a portfolio of high-quality, innovative research activities designed to achieve long-term development impact among host country beneficiaries. The FtF Innovation Labs are expected not only to generate improved knowledge, technologies, and practices, but to make outputs available to partners who will take them to scale. Applicants must briefly describe how they will strengthen linkages and partnerships among key partners for technology design, handoff and scaling.

- d. **Anticipated Outcomes and Results:** Identify the specific outcomes and results the approach/activities seeks to achieve and define “success.” Identify Outcomes and results that can be achieved during the program’s lifetime as well as any potential “quick wins” that may be delivered in the earlier phases of the work. The nature, scope, and sustainability of outcomes and results will be critical to assessing the costs and benefits – and determining whether the SOI will proceed to the next stage of the merit review process.
- e. **List of Partner Roles and Responsibilities (if applicable):** Include a list of proposed applicant partners (private, public, NGO, etc.) to be considered as subrecipients (see 2 CFR 200.331 and 200.332). Identify organization name, point of contact, point of contact information (phone and email), federal share to be award by the pass-through entity, cost-share (if applicable), and a summary of proposed roles and responsibilities. Include a summary of the management structure and the broad approach to coordination. *Note: This should be a brief, preliminary characterization of roles and responsibilities that may evolve significantly during the subsequent phase. Partner letters of commitment are not requested as part of the concept note submission.*
- f. **Summary Budget Annex** (will not count against the 8 total page count): All proposed costs must be allowable per [2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles](#). Please include in the Summary Budget header the applicant organization’s name, program title, and duration of the program. The Summary Budget must include the total proposed Federal Share in U.S. dollars listed according to the cost categories in the Summary Budget Table Example below. If Cost Share is proposed, this should be included in the Budget Summary as shown below. Please provide the total proposed Contractual costs for sub-recipient organizations, and if specific organizations have been identified at this phase, provide the total for each proposed sub-recipient organization as a separate Contractual sub-category item. An optional Summary Budget template is available in the “Suggested Templates and Guidance” section under “Budget Guidance for Applicants - New Award Budget Sample” at: <https://www.state.gov/resources-for->

[programs-and-grants/](#). The Summary Budget Annex should not exceed one page.

**Summary Budget Table Example:**

<b>Cost Category</b>	<b>Federal Share</b>	<b>Cost Share (if applicable)</b>	<b>Total Project Budget</b>
<b>A. Personnel</b>			
<b>B. Fringe Benefits</b>			
<b>C. Travel</b>			
<b>D. Equipment</b>			
<b>E. Supplies</b>			
<b>F. Contractual (including subawards)</b>			
<b>G. Construction</b>			
<b>H. Other Direct Costs</b>			
<b>I. Total Direct Costs</b>			
<b>J. Total Indirect Costs</b>			
<b>K. Total (Sum I-J)</b>			

- g. **Relevant Past Performance Annex** (will not count against the 8 total page count): information regarding its recent history of performance for all its cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs, not to exceed five projects as follows:
- I. Name of the awarding organization;
  - II. Award number; Activity title;
  - III. A brief description of the activity;
  - IV. Period of performance;
  - V. Award amount;
  - VI. Reports and findings from any audits performed in the last three years;
  - VII. Name of at least two (2) updated professional contacts who most directly observed the work at the organization for which the service was performed with complete current contact information.

- If the applicant encountered problems on any of the referenced Awards, they may provide a short explanation and the corrective action taken. The applicant should not provide general information on its performance.
- h. **SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance)** (will not count against the 8 total page count).
  - i. **Statement on Eligibility Annex (as applicable)** (will not count against the 8 total page count): Applicants that are not “land-grant universities,” “sea-grant colleges,” or “Native American land-grant colleges” under the statutory definition of Title XII “universities” must submit with their application an additional attachment with a statement relating to their eligibility under the statutory definition of Title XII institutions as described in Section B.1. above. This statement must contain references to other parts of the Technical and/or Cost Application and to non-proprietary and publicly available references, and must not exceed two (2) pages in length.

The SOI is meant to convey initial ideas regarding a proposed project. As the negotiation and/or consultative program design (if applicable) process continues, the ideas and approaches may evolve as the applicant and the Department of State determine the most appropriate way to work together to address the problems, challenges, issues, and opportunities.

Required Format of SOI Submission: All documents must be written in English, and all costs must be presented 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 document is provided in both English and a foreign language, the English language version is the controlling version. All pages must be numbered. Additional requirements are as follows:

- All documents must be formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper
- All documents must be single-spaced, written in a minimum of 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins.
- The exception is captions and footnotes which 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.
- Submissions must be no more than 8 pages not inclusive of annexes and required documents (SF-424).
- The SOI and all accompanying annex documents should be combined into a single document for submission, in a searchable and editable PDF or Word

format, with the exception of the required form SF-424. The Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) must be submitted separately, with any applicable attachments added within the form where indicated.

## **E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines**

### ***1. Address to Request Application Package***

Application forms and other materials required to apply are available at [grants.gov](https://grants.gov) or [MyGrants](#) under the announcement title “Feed the Future Innovation Lab,” funding opportunity number “DFOP0017826.”

Faxed, couriered, or emailed documents will not be accepted. Reasonable accommodations may, in appropriate circumstances, be provided to applicants with disabilities or for security reasons.

### ***2. Department of State Contacts***

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact: [FTFIL-SOI@state.gov](mailto:FTFIL-SOI@state.gov).

Any questions regarding this SOI must be emailed to [FTFIL-SOI@state.gov](mailto:FTFIL-SOI@state.gov) by February 26, 2026, at 4:00pm Washington, D.C. time. Questions and Answers or FAQ will be posted on [grants.gov](https://grants.gov), by March 10, 2026, to answer questions from all potential applicants.

### **3. Unique entity identifier 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. Please begin your registration as early as possible.*

- 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.
- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- Organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities. If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove an NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket (“incident”) with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at [www.fsd.gov](http://www.fsd.gov) using the following language: *“I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain an NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated.”*
  - Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.
  - Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoD in addition to Department of State should apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:
    - NCAGE Homepage:  
<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx>
    - NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):  
[NCAGE Code Request Tool \(nato.int\)](https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/NCAGECodeRequestTool.aspx)

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See [2 CFR 25.110](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-25/subpart-110/section-25.110) for a full list of

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

#### **4. *Submission Dates and Times***

SOI applications are due no later than April 9, 2026, on grants.gov or **MyGrants** under the announcement title “Feed the Future Innovation Labs,” funding opportunity number “DFOP0017826.”

#### **5. *Funding Restrictions***

- a. The Department of State will not consider applications that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization. Please refer to the link for Foreign Terrorist Organizations: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>.
- b. The Leahy Law prohibits Department foreign assistance funds from supporting foreign security force units if the Secretary of State has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. Per 22 USC §2378d(a) (2017), “No assistance shall be furnished under this chapter [FOREIGN ASSISTANCE] or the Arms Export Control Act [22 USC 2751 et seq.] to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.”
- c. 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 UNRWA.
- d. 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.

- e. Certification Regarding Compliance with applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws: If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this Statement of Interest will be within the United States, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:
  - 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;
  - 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.
  
- f. Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements. 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.
  
- g. Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan: Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds \$500,000:
  - To the best of the Recipient's knowledge, neither the Recipient, nor any subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor of the Recipient or any agent of the recipient or of such a subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor, is engaged in any of the activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a);
  - The recipient has implemented a Trafficking in Persons compliance plan to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175(a) and is compliant with this plan; and the compliance plan must follow the minimum requirements described in 2 CFR 175(b)(5).

- That the Recipient has and will implement procedures to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a) and to monitor, detect, and terminate any subrecipient, contractor, subcontractor, or employee of the recipient engaging in these activities.

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

h. 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 Statement of Interest (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) On or after December 22, 2025, operating a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system in the performance of the award; and

(3) On or after December 22, 2025, 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.].

## ***6. Other Submission Requirements***

The Department of State bears no responsibility for disqualification that results from applicants not being registered for submission before cycle due dates, for technical system errors, or other errors in the application process.

The Department of State encourages organizations to submit applications during normal business hours (Monday – Friday, 9:00AM - 5:00PM Eastern Standard Time [EST]). If an applicant experiences technical difficulties and has contacted the appropriate helpdesk but is not receiving timely assistance (e.g., if you have not received a response within 48 hours of contacting the helpdesk), you may contact the GFS point of contact listed above. The point of contact may assist in contacting the appropriate helpdesk.

Applicants using MyGrants for the first time will need their “New Organization Registration.” To register with MyGrants, navigate to <https://MyGrants.servicenow.com> and click “Create an Account” under “New User?” On the pop-up select “Create a MyGrants Applicant/Grantee Account” and complete all required fields. Once completed, an email will be sent to verify the account creation followed by an Okta Account set-up which will require the use of a smartphone for multi-factor authentication (MFA). If an applicant does not have accessibility to a smartphone during the time of account creation, please contact the helpdesk. For assistance with MyGrants accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact the ILMS help desk by phone at +1 (888) 313-4567 (toll charges apply for international callers) or through the Self Service online portal that can be accessed from [ILMS Self Service Portal](#).

Customer support is available 24/7.

## **F. Application Review Information**

### ***1. Review Criteria***

Each submission will be evaluated and rated based on the evaluation criteria outlined below.

**Quality of Program Idea – 50 points:** The SOI is responsive to program objectives and utilizes an approach that ensures scientific quality. The application must highlight how research outputs may support global, regional and national efforts in food security. The application must address how the program plans to meet the policy priorities of the Department of State. The program idea must be clearly communicated and feasible within the timeframe and consider sustainability and potential impact. SOI's that promote measurable, impactful approaches to program objectives are highly encouraged. The proposed timeline is reasonable. The FtF Innovation Lab will build on lessons learned within the broader research community and research topic area for increased sustainability of program impacts.

**Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 30 points:** The SOI should clearly articulate proposed program activities with a timeline and expected results towards achieving program objectives and goal(s). This evaluation component will also consider the proposed staffing footprint, geographic locations and network/relationship maturity to ensure the ability to achieve objectives.

**Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants – 20 points:** The SOI should demonstrate the organization's expertise and previous experience in administering programs. If a local partner is identified SOI should briefly describe the partner's role and experience.

### ***2. Review and Selection Process***

#### **A. Phase 1- SOI Review and Selection:**

All technically eligible SOIs will be reviewed against the criteria listed above by a Merit Review Panel (MRP). There may be multiple MRPs to review SOIs based on program area, country, or region, as appropriate. SOIs will only be evaluated once. For a fair review, all panelists will review the first page of the SOI up to the page limit and no further (not including Annex of past performance.)

The MRP may provide conditions and/or recommendations on SOIs to enhance the proposed program, which must be addressed by the organization in the full proposal application and/or collaborative design process, as applicable. To ensure effective use of funding, conditions and recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and program activities.

The Department of State reserves the right to make a final determination regarding all funding matters, pending funding availability.

All Merit Review Panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflict of interest agreements. The Department of State will not share statements of interest with other applicants.

## **B. Phase 2 –Request for Full Proposals**

Following the MPR review, approved SOI applicants will be directed to an announcement available via MyGrants to submit a full proposal application based on their approved concept. A full application typically includes but is not limited to the following:

- Updated SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance) (if applicable)
- SF424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)
- SF424B (Assurances for Non-Construction programs) (if applicable)
- Coversheet/Executive Summary
- Proposal Narrative
- Budget Narrative
- Detailed Budget
- Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
- Key Personnel
- Timeline
- Attachments, (if applicable)

Detailed instructions regarding the full application submission process will be provided to those applicants that move to phase 2.

### **3. 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
- f. If there are any program specific risk factors that will be considered, describe them here.

Prior to making an award with a total federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, the federal awarding agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (formerly FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313). An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov. Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 CFR 200.206, the Department of State will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

## **G. Award Notices**

The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer (GO). The award agreement is the authorizing document, and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the GO.

If an application is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this SOI 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.

## **H. Post-Award Requirements and Administration**

### ***1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements***

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

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

- [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:
  - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
  - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
  - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
  - Terminating agreements pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340). For the avoidance of doubt, the Department has sole discretion over the determination that an award no longer effectuates program goals or agency priorities, and this provision permits awards to be terminated at the Department’s convenience, including when it determines that the award no longer advances the national interest.
  
- [2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT](#)
- [2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION](#)
- [2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS](#)
- [2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE \(FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE\)](#)
- [2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY](#)
- [2 CFR Chapter VI – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS](#)  
[2 CFR Chapter VI – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS](#)

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

## 2. *Reporting*

Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program performance reports. The award document will specify what reports are required and how often these reports must be submitted.

**Foreign Assistance Data Review:** As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or regions or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

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 Guidance for Contracts and Grants - U.S. Department of State Brand System. Branding policy exceptions are outlined in the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual 10 FAM 416, Policy Exceptions. For more information, visit: <https://brand.america.gov/>.