

# PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

## FY 2026 Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES)

### Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017979

### Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) solicitation issued by the Office of Citizen Exchanges' Youth Programs Division for the FY 2026 Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program. Proposals must conform to the solicitation, the guidelines in this document, and the standard Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Any application not adhering to these conditions may be deemed technically ineligible.

These guidelines are **in addition to** the requirements outlined in the solicitation and PSI. In the event of a discrepancy between documents, the solicitation takes precedence.

#### **I. Statement of Work**

The YES program advances the Administration's foreign policy and America First priorities by developing a network of young leaders who understand and support U.S. principles, and that focuses on entrepreneurship, innovation, civic engagement, and leadership. Up to 270 foreign high school participants will study in the United States. All inbound participants live with host families, attend high school, perform community service, and engage in leadership and American Excellence enhancement activities. Proposals may include up to 30 American outbound participants to study abroad. If proposed, American participants would also live with host families, attend high schools, perform community service, and engage in American Excellence enhancement activities.

ECA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for the program.

## **II. General Program Requirements**

The recipient must meet the following requirements throughout the period of performance.

### 1. Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

Develop and enforce protocols to protect personally identifiable information (PII) of applicants, participants, alumni, host families, staff, and volunteers. Ensure staff handling PII take necessary trainings and comply with legal, regulatory, and Department of State privacy requirements. Take prompt action if you discover or suspect a breach of PII protocols, including conducting fact-finding to gather all relevant information. Cooperate with ECA's Grants Office to escalate and address any data exposure.

### 2. Branding and Communications

Brand all materials as U.S. Department of State programs and follow ECA Communications Guidance in all official documents and promotional materials. Coordinate material development with ECA and obtain clearances before publication and distribution. Unless ECA grants a waiver, display the American flag and U.S. Department of State seal on all materials. The Bureau retains copyright and may distribute program-related materials. If permitted, coordinate information for program websites with the recipient and ECA.

### 3. Online Presence: Social Media (if permitted), Mobile Technologies, and Department of State Online Communities

Dedicate staff to coordinate and maintain program websites, market the program online, disseminate information to U.S. and foreign audiences, and provide a secure application and resource tool for participants. If permitted, develop and implement strategies to use mobile technologies and social media to promote the programs.

#### *U.S. Department of State Web Resources*

Support ECA promotional campaigns by providing updated information and materials. In consultation with ECA's Program Office and in coordination with

Alumni Affairs and Web and Social Media teams, develop and implement strategies to leverage mobile and online technologies, as well as the Department's digital properties, such as the International Exchange Alumni website and social media platforms (if permitted), to promote the program, enhance in-person exchanges, and engage alumni.

Ensure all staff, program personnel, and volunteers associated with the YES program understand Department of State resources, including [alumni.state.gov](http://alumni.state.gov), and facilitate member registration on the website.

#### 4. Financial Management

Manage fiscal data and accounting for award funding as required by federal law, including cost-sharing and any funds provided to approved sub-award recipients, as applicable.

#### 5. U.S. Department of State Consultation

Work closely with the ECA program office to carry out all aspects of the program. During periods of heightened activity, anticipate daily communication to coordinate efforts and share information. Clearly delineate points of contact for various functions and establish appropriate chains of communication for any situation.

#### 6. Information Management

Maintain a participant placement database which is accessible to ECA and the recipient (including subgrantees) for quick information uploads. Track applicants from recruitment through selection, placement, and transition to alumni status. Regularly update the database to ensure accurate reporting and share data in formats compatible with ECA databases. Allow staff to access records only on a need-to-know basis and restrict disclosure of sensitive PII to authorized individuals in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 and Department of State policies. Update official records only when necessary and as part of staff's official duties.

### **III. Specific Responsibilities**

- Recruit, select, orient, and arrange travel for YES inbound participants, and liaise with natural parents. Use a merit-based recruitment and selection process that includes English language testing.

- In coordination with ECA, prepare and implement guidelines for program operations, including handling participant issues, managing early returns, overseeing public communications, and facilitating information sharing.
- Plan American Excellence enhancement activities.
- Market the program, manage social media (if permitted), and maintain a database to track all applicants.
- Coordinate the overall program with ECA.
- Monitor and evaluate the program.
- Place participants with host families and enroll participants in schools.
- Monitor and ensure the participants' health, safety and well-being.

### 1. Coordination with Embassies

Establish and maintain positive, effective working relationships between all overseas program representatives and the Office of Public Affairs/Public Affairs Section (OPA/PAS) at each U.S. embassy or consulate. Meet with OPA/PAS within 30 days of award. Promptly notify ECA of any embassy requests that impact budget or capacity and submit meeting summaries to the ECA program office as requested.

Facilitate U.S. Embassy Public Diplomacy (PD) involvement in recruitment, selection, orientations, enhancement activities, alumni activities, and briefings, if possible or desired.

Maintain an open, consultative relationship with U.S. Embassy PD contacts and the ECA program office, with at least monthly contact regarding recruitment, selection, security, travel, participant issues, invitations to events, and other relevant matters. Inform PD contacts and ECA of participant successes. If political conditions limit program activities in a country, make special provisions to continue program functions efficiently and cost-effectively.

### 2. Overseas Presence and Communications

The ongoing communications with natural parents and relations with foreign government officials require that your organization (or its sub-grantees) maintain a consistent presence in participating countries.

### 3. Issue DS-2019 Forms and Adhere to J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program Regulations

Designate an Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) and a backup to ensure compliance with all relevant Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

requirements. Issue DS-2019 forms for international participants and alternates, as all international participants will travel on a U.S. government designation for the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor program. Create and update inbound participants' SEVIS status and maintain all SEVIS records. Submit placement reports and change of placement reports to ECA's Youth Programs Division's Responsible Officer. Provide assistance to ECA with SEVIS-related matters as requested.

#### 4. Program and Promotional Materials

Design and develop materials to support all program components and inform program participants overseas and in the United States. Create application forms, participant, host family, and school administrator handbooks, operational guidelines, and pre-departure orientation materials. Develop additional materials as requested by ECA and update existing materials to address changing needs.

#### 5. Medical Screening

Arrange in-country medical clearances to ensure participants are healthy and have the necessary immunizations for program participation before they leave their home countries. Review medical documents in the United States to confirm all requirements have been met. Identify and inform the ECA Program Office of any participant pre-existing physical or mental health conditions that may affect insurability and participant support in the United States. For any participants with disabilities, conduct a special review that includes ECA staff and a medical doctor, to confirm that applicants with disabilities are medically fit to travel and participate in the program.

#### 6. Travel

Arrange roundtrip international airline tickets from participants' home communities in all designated countries to their host communities and assist with passports and visas. Ensure travel is efficient, cost-effective, and compliant with the Fly America Act and all USG travel regulations. Select and train adult flight leaders to manage groups of teenage travelers, prioritizing staff or alumni who can also serve as trainers and facilitators at orientations or represent the YES program at events.

Develop detailed written travel procedures for inbound participants. Specify group flight scheduling, participant assignments, date-change processing, and itinerary distribution. Ensure travel includes domestic segments outside main capital cities and provide full roundtrip itineraries. Clearly explain domestic travel obligations

and deadlines for submitting arrival airport codes. Describe participant support while en route, including airport staffing and emergency communication procedures.

Coordinate travel for participants unable to travel with escorted groups, including those repatriated early. Budget for escorted travel for approximately twelve early-returning participants when necessary for health, behavior, or security reasons. Coordinate all travel dates with ECA before finalizing arrangements with travel agencies or venues.

### *Participant Travel Documents*

Obtain, and retain for three years, copies of the following documents for each program participant:

- Name/photo page of international passport.
- Visa page in passport.
- DS-2019 with stamp issued at U.S. port of entry (for YES inbound participants).

### 7. Participant Highlights

Provide timely reports of significant participant accomplishments demonstrating program impact.

### 8. Host Families

Recruit, screen, select, and secure host families before participants depart their home countries. Ensure all practices comply with Exchange Visitor Program regulations for secondary school students (22 CFR 62.25) at a minimum. Proposals detailing compliance and oversight of local coordinators will be more competitive. Contact the YES program office with questions about regulations.

### 9. Host Schools

Secure enrollment in accredited secondary educational institutions for the participants prior to departures from their home countries. Practices and procedures for placing YES participants in secondary schools must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category (22 CFR 62.25). Encourage school administrators to utilize participants as resources in the classroom and community. Discuss options for extracurricular

activities that correlate with YES goals (e.g., Student Council, Junior Achievement, Future Business Leaders of America, community activities).

Due to cultural sensitivities, recipient must obtain ECA concurrence and approval from participants and natural parents before placing in religious schools. Recipient must request ECA concurrence to utilize award funds for private school tuition. Home schooling and long-term virtual schooling are not allowed; a school may, however, temporarily move to a virtual format to safeguard public health and safety during the period the participant is enrolled. Recipient must inform ECA if participants are placed in other non-traditional schools, such as charter or non-religious private schools.

#### 10. Clustering

ECA encourages placements throughout the United States in a wide range of rural, urban, and suburban settings. Recipients that choose to cluster all or most of their participants will be deemed more competitive under the Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Program Aims and Purpose review criterion. A cluster is defined as a minimum of three ECA-funded exchange participants who live within reasonable proximity and can be brought together for activities that address common ECA-funded program themes (e.g., orientations and enhancement activities).

ECA-funded exchange participants are identified as those participating in YES, FLEX, or the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) programs. Applicants are expected to cluster a minimum of 60% of their placements. Multiple local coordinators may work together to form a cluster. Applicants must describe how local staff and volunteers will provide non-clustered exchange participants with the benefits of orientations and American Excellence enhancement activities.

#### 11. Trainings/Orientations

Plan and conduct the following trainings and orientations, and include sample outlines in your proposal appendix:

*YES-specific Staff/Volunteer Training and Orientation:* Train all employees, local coordinators, and volunteers on YES program goals, expectations, J-1 visa requirements, and cross-cultural issues. Describe your training and knowledge-review plan in your proposal and report on its implementation in semi-annual

performance reports. ECA will include your local coordinator training data in annual compliance reporting.

*Host Family Orientation:* Prior to the participants' arrival, conduct an in-person YES-specific orientation for all screened and selected host families and provide them with the information and reference materials necessary to host and support a YES participant.

(Note: Previous interviews during the screening and selection process do not constitute this YES-specific orientation.) The program office recommends that orientations for YES host families either be held separately from those for other host families or include a dedicated session, ensuring adequate attention to program-related and cross-cultural issues.

*Arrival Orientation for Participants:* Your practices and procedures for the YES participant arrival orientation must meet the general J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program regulations and the Secondary School Student category-specific orientation requirements. Orientations should take place within one month of the participants' arrival and address the recipient's policies, procedures, and rules, as well as the recipient's procedures for communicating with participants and for monitoring and supporting their exchange, with sensitivity to cultural issues specific to this exchange population. The orientations must ensure understanding of the goals, expectations, and requirements of the YES program as explained in this NOFO. ECA strongly recommends that participant orientations be conducted in person.

*Re-entry Training:* Prepare participants to bring closure to their American exchange experiences and prepare them for re-entry to their home countries.

## 12. Participant Monitoring and Support

ECA employs Participant Monitoring Specialists who oversee the health and safety of all YES participants during their time in the United States. The recipient must work closely with ECA's monitors on escalated cases and document these cases promptly. Ensure your participant monitoring practices and procedures comply with Exchange Visitor Program regulations for secondary school students (22 CFR 62.25). Follow additional guidance provided by ECA's Youth Programs Division in the Office of Citizen Exchanges.

### *Participant Monitoring Guidance*

*Local Coordinators:* Local coordinators play a vital role in supporting each YES participant. As representatives of the recipient living in the host community, they identify and vet host families, process host school enrollment, conduct orientations, and provide guidance and support to participants and host families throughout the program, as required by J-1 visa regulations. Ensure each YES participant has access to a local coordinator within 120 miles of their host family home, in accordance with J-1 visa regulations. Local coordinators must report all placement changes and participant support concerns to the recipient promptly, following Communications Guidance.

*Participant Progress:* Local coordinators monitor participants' academic progress, social adjustment, and involvement in activities such as community service. Track exemplary achievements and other program-related endeavors in monthly contact reports.

*Reporting Systems:* Use reporting systems to distribute and collect monthly updates and reports that participants complete and submit themselves. Detail this system in your proposal. Use these monthly updates to identify and track issues. Promptly notify ECA of any problems, inconsistencies, or concerns identified from these updates.

*Participant Support:* Local coordinators identify when participants need additional support from their natural parents, peers, or other recipient staff. They arrange counseling if needed, document the circumstances, and notify the recipient, to gain natural parent perspective or concurrence when necessary. The recipient also notifies ECA as needed.

*Participant Disciplinary Process:* A three-step disciplinary and support process should be outlined in the event a participant requires counseling for behavioral or adjustment concerns. Examples of this include written warnings or letters of encouragement as a first step, a probation-level letter as the second, and an early return request as the third and final disciplinary consequence of continued support concerns. Proposals that include sample support letters and outline the disciplinary process will be more competitive.

*Early Returns:* If a situation requires an early return, provide ECA with thorough documentation to ensure participants, host families, and natural families are informed and consulted. Promptly prepare a clear and concise Incident Report detailing the circumstances, actions taken, and communication between parties. Share the report with ECA. Only ECA's Youth Programs Division may decide to terminate and repatriate a participant. Do not inform or imply to participants that their program will end or that they will be repatriated without explicit direction from the Youth Programs Division.

*Site Visits:* Full-time permanent employees or official designees from the recipient's headquarters must conduct site visits to 10 to 20% of YES participants in their host family and community environments, covering both clustered and non-clustered students. ECA Participant Monitoring Unit members will also conduct site visits, and the recipient organization or applicable sub-recipient(s) should plan to assist with scheduling these monitoring visits throughout the semester.

*Communication Guidance:* Report to ECA any matters required by J-1 visa regulations, regardless of whether you are designated as a sponsor by the U.S. Department of State. Provide ECA's Participant Monitoring Unit with reports on all situations affecting the health, safety, or well-being of YES participants. Enter complete, accurate, and up-to-date placement information into the YES web-based database, including any host family or local coordinator changes, within 48 hours of the change.

### 13. Communication with Natural Families

Communicate and liaise with participants' natural families throughout the program. Inform families promptly of any problems that arise with the participant, including academic deficiencies, behavioral concerns, health and safety issues, transfers to a new host family or school, and any situations that may require early termination from the program. Provide on-program support for participants, staff, and volunteers when addressing issues with natural parents.

### 14. Participant Photo and Video Usage

Request and maintain documentation of permission from each participant and their natural family (if a minor) to take and reproduce photographic or video images in ECA-approved printed and electronic promotional materials.

### 15. American Excellence Enhancement Activities

Conduct American Excellence enhancement activities and leadership development programs throughout the exchange, disbursing funds in small increments during the semester, with a budget of \$400 per participant. Do not use funds for large, packaged sightseeing trips. Include debrief sessions in all activities to help participants discuss and analyze their experiences.

Design American Excellence activities to deepen participants' understanding of American culture, principles, and history. Expose participants to American excellence through briefings on government and the judicial system, freedom of speech, community programs, business and tech incubators, and sports activities.

Promptly share information from ECA about Department of State-initiated YES activities and any ad-hoc program-related events, such as online meetings or briefings, with all participants.

### 16. Community Service Activities

Require YES participants to complete at least 15 hours of community service during their program semester. Assist participants in finding community service opportunities and provide them and their host families with clear guidelines on standards, requirements, and expectations, including:

- The minimum number of hours and types of acceptable community service.
- The method you will use to monitor community service.
- The consequences for failing to meet this requirement.

### 17. Health Benefits Coverage

ECA offers the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) benefits plan at no cost to the recipient. If you choose a different plan, you must show it provides coverage equal to or better than ASPE and meets 22 CFR 62.14 requirements.

Coverage must start when participants leave their home countries and end upon their return. If you do not use ASPE, include your health policy and its cost in your proposal. Inform participants and their families in writing of any coverage limitations. For ASPE details,

visit: <https://www.sevencorners.com/about/gov/usdos>.

### 18. Participant Financial and Gift Incentives

Require participants to engage in program activities such as orientations, cluster meetings, community service, and cultural presentations. Do not request funds for monetary or material incentives for participation.

### 19. Performance Reporting

Report your organization's successes and challenges in meeting program goals through two semi-annual reports and interim updates as requested. Submit semi-annual performance reports within 30 days of each reporting period, following guidelines from the YES program office and the award agreement. Describe your training and knowledge-review plan for J-1 visa requirements in your proposal and confirm its implementation in your reports. Submit a final program report within 120 days of the award's expiration or termination.

### **Additional Recipient Responsibilities:**

#### A. Recruitment and Selection of Inbound Participants

Develop an outreach plan that supports recruitment of a participant pool that broadly reflects the country. Recruit, screen, and select YES inbound finalists and alternates through an open, transparent, merit-based competition. Establish a standard recruitment and selection process for all countries and maintain applicant and participant statistics at each stage. Use uniform application forms across all countries, separating any country-specific requirements. Do not charge application fees.

Verify that all finalists meet age, academic, and English proficiency requirements for U.S. high school enrollment. Select finalists who are citizens or permanent residents of their respective countries; obtain ECA approval or guidance for non-citizens and permanent residents. If budget or security concerns limit recruitment, consult with the U.S. embassy to focus efforts on major population centers or specific regions. Develop contingency plans for recruitment in countries with challenging governments.

#### *Criteria for YES Inbound Participants:*

a. Applicants must be citizens or permanent residents of the country where they apply.

- b. Applicants must be ages 15 to 18.5 at the program start date; each country may set specific age requirements based on local educational system restrictions.
- c. Applicants demonstrate maturity, good character, and scholastic aptitude.
- d. Applicants must demonstrate sufficient ability to speak and study in English and succeed in an American high school. The recipient must use English language testing resources, understand general levels required for U.S. high school admission, and establish minimum test scores for all selected participants.
- e. Give preference to applicants who have spent more than 50% of the last five years in the country of application.
- f. Give preference to applicants who have not previously studied in the United States.
- g. Require applicants to commit to cultural immersion in the United States through a home-stay experience.
- h. Select applicants who can meet cross-cultural challenges with maturity and an open mind.
- i. Require applicants to plan for sharing their U.S. experience with their home school and community upon return.

#### B. Support of Participants with Disabilities

Provide necessary support and accommodation for selected participants with disabilities. Participants with disabilities may receive reasonable accommodations for testing. Implement a review process carried out by a medical doctor to adequately assess the unique needs of each participant and confirm that applicants with disabilities are medically fit to travel and participate in the program. Ensure that interviews, orientations, and other pre- and post-program activities include reasonable accommodations.

#### C. Passports, Visa, and Other Travel Documentation

Assist all YES inbound participants in obtaining passports, U.S. visas, and any necessary transit visas in coordination with the respective U.S. embassies. Work with the U.S. embassy in each country to ensure timely processing of U.S. visas for all participants. Collect and process all participant data in the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and prepare DS-2019 forms for finalists and alternates. Maintain and update SEVIS records as required, including finalizing records when participants' programs end or when they do not participate. Submit participant data to ECA in the Excel spreadsheet provided by ECA.

#### D. Pre-Departure Orientations

Provide uniform pre-departure orientation (PDO) programming to prepare participants for life in the United States. Ensure uniformity to reinforce participants' identity as U.S. government exchange program recipients and to deliver essential information, policies, and procedures for their success. Cover topics such as living with a host family, American high school education, American Excellence enhancement activities, American culture and respecting cultural differences, participant safety and available resources, sexual harassment and resources, obeying rules, personal responsibility, realistic expectations, mental health, on-program participant support, budgeting, and community service.

Invite U.S. embassy personnel to PDOs with sufficient notice. If security concerns prevent your organization from conducting PDO sessions in a country, arrange for U.S. embassy staff to conduct the orientations, or hold them in a neighboring country, or—with ECA approval—in the United States after participants arrive. Provide orientations for natural parents before participants depart for the United States.

Distribute domestic-specific materials before or during the PDO.

#### **Specific Responsibilities for outbound YES Abroad Program, if proposed**

##### A. U.S. Marketing

Develop and implement a comprehensive outreach and marketing plan for recruitment, including a program and application website and printed informational materials and handbooks. Conduct outreach at any time during the award period.

##### B. YES-Specific Staff/Volunteer Training and Orientation

Ensure all overseas implementing partner staff and volunteers who have regular contact with YES Abroad participants complete suitability screening and training. Design the training to equip them with methods and tools for monitoring, supporting, and counseling participants, host families, and school personnel, with sensitivity to cross-cultural issues. Ensure the training covers the goals, expectations, and requirements of the YES Abroad program. Develop proper reporting procedures and ensure staff and volunteers understand their roles in communicating participant and placement concerns.

### C. Recruitment

Develop an extensive, nationwide, merit-based recruitment and selection process to attract strong U.S. applicants. Maintain statistics at all stages, including initial applications received, full applications with essays, and interviews conducted.

### D. Selection

Select finalists and alternates from a broad pool of candidates. Use a fair and objective multi-stage process to evaluate applications and select participants.

#### *Criteria for YES Abroad Students*

- a. Applicants must be U.S. citizens.
- b. Applicants must be at least 15 years old and no older than 18.5 years as of the program start date. Specific countries may set a narrower age range based on local high school and Ministry of Education requirements.
- c. Applicants may not be immediate family members of U.S. Department of State employees or of award recipient employees whose official duties involve ECA Youth Programs Division-funded programs.
- d. Applicants should demonstrate maturity, good character, and scholastic aptitude.
- e. Applicants should commit to cultural immersion in a host culture through a home-stay experience.
- f. Applicants should express interest in learning the predominant language of the host culture.
- g. Applicants should demonstrate the ability to meet cross-cultural challenges with maturity and an open mind.
- h. Applicants can develop and articulate ideas and plans for sharing their overseas experiences in their U.S. home schools and communities.

### E. Pre-Exchange Participant Resources

Develop and distribute language and cultural resource packets to finalists upon their acceptance into the program. Ensure the materials clearly outline the goals and requirements of the YES Abroad program.

### F. Passports and Visas

Coordinate with finalists and alternates to obtain all required documents, such as passports and visas, and facilitate the process as much as possible.

#### G. Pre-Program Orientations

Provide pre-program orientations before participants depart. Brief host institutions, staff, families, and participants on the YES Abroad program's purpose, foreign policy context, goals, expectations, rules, and practical information. Introduce personal and cultural adjustment issues and prepare participants to adapt to their host cultures. Train host country support staff to explain cultural differences Americans may face. Include a general overview of the host countries' political, historical, educational, and cultural backgrounds, program objectives and themes, and practical details. Prepare participants to encounter varied interpretations of U.S. policy and history while abroad.

#### H. Participant Tax Liabilities

Assume full responsibility for complying with all applicable tax treaties and for withholding and reporting Federal, State, and local taxes for American YES Abroad participants.

#### I. School Enrollment

Identify and enroll participants in private or public high schools that primarily serve host country nationals and hold accreditation from the host country's Ministry of Education. Include tuition, room, and board costs in dormitories in your budget if needed, with prior ECA approval. If the only suitable school requires dormitory living during the week, place participants in this setting and ensure the in-country partner identifies a suitable family to host them on weekends and holidays, providing a meaningful cultural family experience.

#### J. Host Family Placement and Orientation

Develop a plan to monitor participants' safety and welfare that aligns, as closely as possible, with J-1 visa standards for international academic year participants in 22 CFR 62. This includes identifying and using appropriate methods to verify the integrity and suitability of each host family.

Include reasonable stipend payments to host families in your budget to cover actual food and hosting expenses. Obtain approval from the Public Affairs Section of the relevant U.S. embassy and from ECA for the city and neighborhood of all host

family and dormitory housing arrangements. Provide a pre-arrival orientation for host families that covers program goals, policies, and cultural information to support adjustment and cross-cultural communication.

#### K. Placement Reports

Provide ECA with confirmation that embassies concur with the general school and housing placement strategy and location well in advance of the program and before engaging significantly with prospective host families and schools. Submit a detailed electronic placement report to ECA before YES Abroad participants depart. Include country placement maps, the names of all YES Abroad participants, their host country, host family names and addresses, host school names, and language of instruction.

#### L. Arrival Orientation, Including Safety and Security Briefing

Organize an in-country arrival orientation within one month of participants' arrival. Address program policies, procedures, and rules, as well as your organization's procedures for communicating with participants and for monitoring and supporting their exchange, with sensitivity to cultural issues unique to this exchange population and host country. Ensure participants understand the goals, expectations, and requirements of the YES Abroad Program as outlined in this document.

Contact the U.S. embassy or consulate well in advance of participants' arrival to arrange for PD participation in the orientation and, if possible, a security briefing by the embassy's Regional Security Officer or another U.S. embassy official. Inform participants of relevant local and country-specific information, including personal and general safety considerations and emergency services the embassy offers to American citizens. Ensure participants and their parents or legal guardians complete relevant consular forms and register in the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program at <https://step.state.gov/step/>.

#### M. In-Country Language Program

Evaluate participants' language needs in each country and provide language instruction to support their success in school, with host families, and in the community. Offer YES Abroad participants a minimum two-week intensive language program upon arrival. Continue language and cultural education courses as needed throughout the program. Request funding as necessary for tutors or

instructors, meeting space, participant travel and lodging for language courses, language learning materials, online courses, and other resources.

#### N. American Excellence Enhancement Activities

Design, plan, and implement a substantive extracurricular American Excellence enhancement program for YES Abroad participants focused on leadership development, community service, and business and entrepreneurship. Engage participants in community service activities throughout the program. Arrange visits to U.S. businesses and, if possible, American Chambers of Commerce in the host country.

#### O. Participant -Support and Monitoring

Maintain at least monthly personal contact with YES Abroad participants and host families during the program. Ensure schools have contact information for the local organization representative and the program sponsor's main office. Immediately report to ECA any situation affecting participant safety, health, or well-being, as well as any incident or allegation of sexual exploitation, harassment, or abuse. Promptly inform ECA of any serious problem or controversy that could bring notoriety to the Department or the program.

Provide ECA with a monthly summary of each participant's adjustment, activities, and well-being. Develop a reporting system that includes: 1) a brief monthly summary of program activities, challenges, and accomplishments; 2) an objective assessment of each participant's adjustment and progress; and 3) a monthly participant survey, which they must complete and submit themselves. Obtain ECA approval for the system and survey questions.

Ensure in-country representatives regularly monitor participants and provide adequate support and guidance. Representatives must maintain at least monthly contact with participants and host families, address concerns promptly, and keep ECA informed of significant issues. Maintain all records and data, including survey responses and contact information, for at least three years and provide them to ECA upon request.

#### P. End-of-Program Orientations

Prepare participants to conclude their exchange and re-enter their home communities. Provide information on YES Abroad program resources and opportunities and discuss plans for possible alumni projects.

#### Q. Insurance

Enroll YES Abroad participants in ECA's ASPE health benefits plan or another comparable plan that meets required standards, including emergency medical evacuation and repatriation coverage, for the duration of the exchange.

#### R. Cell Phones

Provide YES Abroad participants with a cell phone and minutes for use in emergencies, if needed.

#### S. Stipends

Provide each YES Abroad participant with a monthly stipend of up to \$200, based on the local cost of living, to cover pocket money, incidentals, and other expenses.

### **IV. PROPOSAL CONTENTS**

Applicants must submit a complete and thorough proposal that addresses the program's objectives and requirements. Proposals should be clear, concise, and responsive to the criteria outlined in the solicitation and PSI.

Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

**NOTE:** Proposals submitted through Grants.gov may only be submitted in the following formats:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) - Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>.
- ASCII Text

- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images)

## **V. OTHER AWARD INFORMATION**

### **Adherence To All Regulations Governing the J Visa**

Proposals must demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) Programs as outlined in **22 CFR 62**. For more information, visit <http://j1visa.state.gov>.

## **VI. APPLICATION SUBMISSION**

The solicitation document specifies the deadline and method for proposal submission. **There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this deadline.**