

U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)  
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

## FY 2025 Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program: Overseas Components

Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017284  
Application Deadline: August 15, 2025

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### A. Basic Information

#### 1. Overview.

<b>Funding Opportunity Title</b>	FY 2025 Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program: Overseas Components
<b>Funding Opportunity Number</b>	DFOP0017284
<b>Announcement Type</b>	New Cooperative Agreement
<b>Deadline for Applications</b>	August 15, 2025, 11:59pm Eastern (Washington, DC time)
<b>Assistance Listing Number</b>	19.415
<b>Length of Performance Period</b>	36 months; September 2025 - August 2028
<b>Number of Awards Anticipated</b>	1 award
<b>Award Amount</b>	Approximately \$11,761,350
<b>Total Available Funding</b>	Approximately \$11,761,350, pending availability of funds
<b>Type of Funding</b>	FY 2025 Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs (ECE) Funds
<b>Funding Instrument Type</b>	Cooperative Agreement
<b>Anticipated Award Date</b>	September 22, 2025

**This notice is subject to availability of funding.** Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government.

**ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.**

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

## **2. Executive Summary.**

### **Priority Region: 30 countries of strategic importance**

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program strengthens national security by engaging emerging young leaders from the United States and from countries of strategic importance. YES is a merit-based, academic-year program consisting of two exchange cohorts: YES and YES Abroad. YES brings approximately 450 high school participants to the United States each year from approximately 30 countries of strategic importance. Participants live with volunteer Americans host families in all 50 states, study in U.S. high schools, engage in community service activities, and learn leadership skills for an academic year. YES Abroad sends approximately 60 American high school participants abroad each year to select YES countries for a similar program.

The FY 2025 Kennedy-Lugar YES Program: Overseas Components cooperative agreement, which is the subject of this NOFO, will fund the recruitment, selection, orientation, travel, liaison activities with natural parents, and alumni support for international and U.S. participants. This award will also fund the placement and support of U.S. participants abroad. Participant placement and support for the international participants in the United States will be conducted under separate awards. The exchanges for both cohorts will take place during the 2026-27 academic year.

The YES and YES Abroad programs strengthen U.S. national security by developing the next generation of leaders from the United States and 30 countries of strategic importance in all world regions. The YES inbound program exposes participants to American culture and values and cultivates their lifelong affinity for the United States. YES Abroad develops the cultural, linguistic, and leadership skills of American youth, making them more competitive in the workforce. YES boosts the U.S. economy because the bulk of the program funding is spent in American host communities, most often in small towns and rural areas, across all 50 states.

## **B. Eligibility**

### **3. Eligible Applicants.**

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

- U.S. Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations
- U.S. Not-for-profit Public and private educational institutions

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

#### 4. Cost Sharing.

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

#### 5. Other Eligibility Requirements.

- All organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid registration in SAM.gov. Please see *Section E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines* for more information.
- ECA's Grant Guidelines require that organizations demonstrate at least four years of experience in conducting international exchanges to be eligible for awards exceeding \$130,000 in ECA funding. As noted in *Section A. Basic Information*, ECA anticipates issuing one award, for approximately \$11,761,350. Therefore, organizations must demonstrate four years of experience in conducting international exchanges in your proposal to be eligible to apply under this competition.
- All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, and the PSI; not doing so may result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.
- All proposals must contain an SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed line-item budget, and budget narrative.
- Sub-awards: Due to the scope and geographic breadth of this cooperative agreement, ECA anticipates that applicants may propose multiple organizations as sub-award recipients. This approach is encouraged, if necessary, to strengthen the primary award recipient's capacity in each country. Each sub-award recipient must have significant previous experience in youth exchange within the respective country(ies) where it will implement the program. The applicant will, however, be fully responsible for the oversight of its sub-award recipients. Further information on sub-awards is provided in the OMB Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards referenced in section F.2.
- Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.  
**Please note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the PSI document.
- Proposed programs may not include multiple academic year exchanges.

- h. Proposals must identify sub-award recipients, if anticipated, and include letters of commitment from such implementing partners.
- i. Proposals must include all program components and activities outlined in this NOFO, must include all countries listed and may not include countries not listed, or they will be considered unresponsive to the solicitation and be deemed ineligible.

## C. Program Description

The YES inbound cohort brings approximately 450 competitively selected high school participants from countries of strategic importance to study in the United States for an academic year. Participants live with volunteer host families, attend high school, engage in activities to learn about American society and values, acquire leadership skills, and educate Americans about their countries and cultures.

The YES Abroad cohort does the same by sending approximately 60 competitively selected American high school participants and recent graduates to study abroad in certain YES countries for an academic year.

Participating countries and their prescribed allotments are outlined under the Recruitment Targets section that follows and are subject to change.

The FY 2025 Overseas Components cooperative agreement recipient will be responsible for YES and YES Abroad participant recruitment, selection, orientation, and travel; liaison with natural parents; alumni support; and the placement, monitoring and support of YES Abroad participants. Placement and support of the YES participants in the United States will be conducted under separate awards, as explained below, however you will have a role of coordinating with the placement organizations to relay information about the participants to overseas staff and the participants' families.

Under the terms of the program, participants must return to their home countries following the conclusion of their exchange programs. For the international participants, the recipient will be expected to assist and represent the U.S. Department of State in adhering to all requirements and regulations of the J-1 Secondary School Student visa program as per [eCFR :: 22 CFR Part 62 -- Exchange Visitor Program](#). In conducting the YES Abroad program, which is not subject to J-1 visa regulations, the recipient will be expected to uphold similar standards to ensure the safety and well-being of participants.

The recipient should conduct broad outreach and recruitment that addresses priorities of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. embassies abroad for both programs. You will select participants on the basis of merit and personal character. In consultation with ECA, you will establish methods, including minimum English language test scores and academic standards, to ensure participants meet U.S. high school enrollment requirements. You will administer a series of tests and activities and in-person interviews to evaluate applicants on their ability to adjust to

new cultures. In consultation with ECA and the U.S. embassies, you will establish citizenship/residence requirements for YES participants.

You will conduct activities for YES participants as outlined below in direct coordination with U.S. Placement Organizations (POs) responsible for placement and support of these participants working under separate placement awards. The success of the participants and the program depends on your organization working efficiently with ECA and the POs for the duration of the award. While the recipient will be responsible for the coordination of many overarching activities involved in the implementation of the YES program, the POs will recruit, screen, and select and vet U.S. host families for participants; select schools and secure school enrollments for participants; conduct in-person host family and student community-based orientations; monitor and support participants throughout the school year; and organize enhancement activities for participants. Under this award, the recipient will maintain an Operational Guidelines manual for POs that gives them instructions to ensure the coordination of tasks.

### **1. Authority.**

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

### **2. Purpose.**

The Kennedy-Lugar YES program brings high school participants from approximately 30 countries of strategic importance to study for an academic year in the United States, while sending American high school participants to select YES countries, in support of the foreign policy goals of promoting civil society, leadership development, and mutual understanding between Americans and the people of participating countries. Participants live with host families, attend high school, and engage in leadership development and civic education activities. The YES Program: Overseas Components award supports recruitment and selection of approximately 450 international participants, as well as the placement, support, and monitoring of approximately 60 YES Abroad American participants.

### **3. Program Specific Guidelines.**

#### ***Program Timetable***

Funding for the YES inbound cohort will support 2026-2027 academic year exchanges taking place between August 2026 and June 2027. All participants must be enrolled in accredited U.S. schools and placed with host families. Funding for YES Abroad will support academic year

exchanges between July 2026 and June 2027 with specific dates depending on the host countries' academic schedules. A notional timetable follows:

- September 22, 2025: Cooperative Agreement awarded, pending the availability of FY 2025 funds
- Late Summer 2025-Late 2025: Student outreach and recruitment conducted
- January-February 2026: Selection of inbound student finalists and alternates
- January-February 2026: Annual meeting of YES program implementers in Washington, DC
- February-April 2026: Inbound participants' applications submitted to POs
- February-April 2026: YES Abroad participants selected
- June-August 2026: Participant Pre-Departure preparation and orientations
- July-August 2026: Staggered YES Abroad student travel. YES Abroad host family and school placement information to be submitted two weeks prior to departure
- August 2026: Staggered inbound student travel
- August 2026: Arrival workshop for YES inbound participants with disabilities
- August 31, 2026: All placement information (host family names and addresses, confirmed school enrollments, etc.) to be submitted to Department of State for inbound participants
- July-Early September 2026: YES and YES Abroad travel
- Jul7 2026-June 2027: Ongoing oversight and participant monitoring
- June 2027: Participant return travel (Varies May-July for YES Abroad)
- June 2027-Summer 2028: Alumni programming
- August 31, 2028: Cooperative Agreement end date

### ***Recruitment Targets***

The recruitment targets for each country are tentative and may differ from finalist allocations. Finalist allocations are dependent on the availability of funding, legislative mandate, policy considerations, security situations, applicant pools, and PO placement commitments. For planning purposes, use the following country targets which are based on approximately 450 total inbound participants and are subject to change. The proposal should demonstrate current capacity to recruit these target numbers in these countries.

### **YES Program**

Albania (11)	Israel (13)	North Macedonia (16)
Bahrain (6)	Jordan (19)	Pakistan (25)
Bangladesh (19)	Kenya (14)	Saudi Arabia (8)
Bosnia and Herzegovina (19)	Kosovo (16)	Senegal (10)
Bulgaria (19)	Lebanon (12)	Sierra Leone (8)
Cameroon (8)	Liberia (8)	Suriname (6)
Egypt (20)	Libya (8)	Thailand (14)
Ghana (16)	Mali (11)	Tunisia (16)
India (25)	Morocco (18)	Türkiye (25)
Indonesia (25)	Nigeria (15)	West Bank (20)

### **YES Abroad Program**

The approximately 60 YES Abroad participants should be assigned fairly evenly among host countries with no fewer than three participants assigned to each of the following countries:

Bosnia and Herzegovina	Jordan	Senegal
Bulgaria	Morocco	Thailand
India	North Macedonia	Türkiye
Indonesia		

Note: ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program's needs and the availability of funds. In addition, ECA reserves the right to adjust and/or add host countries should conditions change in a host country and/or if other countries and/or regions are identified as viable alternatives and/or Department priorities. You must propose how you will recruit the target number in each of the countries listed, assuming conditions permit recruitment in each country, and you may not deviate from the recruitment targets without prior written approval from the ECA Program Office.

Note: It is ECA's intent that applicants and their natural families incur minimal out-of-pocket costs related to their application or participation, whether or not they are selected for the YES or YES Abroad programs. Participants will receive stipends from their POs for pocket money during the program. The award recipient and any sub-award recipient(s) must not charge participants or their parents for application or program fees.

#### **4. Recipient Responsibilities.**

The following general recipient responsibilities apply to both the YES inbound and YES Abroad cohorts.

##### **a. U.S. Department of State and Embassy Liaison and Consultation**

Your organization will work closely with the ECA Program Office in carrying out all aspects of the programs. At times of heightened activity, you should anticipate daily communication. You must delineate points of contacts for various functions and establish appropriate chains of communications for any situation.

Your organization will ensure all overseas program representatives establish a positive and effective working relationship with the respective U.S. embassy's/consulate's Public Diplomacy Section (PDS). Meet with the PDS of each U.S. embassy within 30 days of the award to discuss the geographic and other priorities for participant recruitment in each country, and, if applicable, the processes for placement of YES Abroad participants. Promptly notify ECA of any embassy requests that impact budget or capacity concerns. Summarize the

results of these meetings and subsequent meetings for submission to the ECA program office, as requested.

Your organization will facilitate PDS involvement in YES recruitment, selection, orientations, and alumni activities, as well as briefings and joint activities for YES Abroad participants, as determined through discussions between your organization's in-country representatives and PDS. During the program-planning phase, implementing organizations should discuss and obtain any requested concurrence on YES Abroad participant placement, including the locations (region or neighborhood) of host family or other long-term accommodations and schools, if applicable.

The recipient must have at least monthly contact with PDS personnel regarding recruitment and selection, security, travel, participant issues and successes, advance invitation to orientations or events, alumni activities, and other matters that may be of concern. In situations where the political situation prevents or limits your organization's implementation of program activities within a particular country, make special provisions to conduct program functions. Conduct all these functions efficiently and cost-effectively.

**b. Overseas Infrastructure and Communications**

Your organization shall maintain the appropriate infrastructure in participant countries to carry out the in-country functions of a youth exchange program. Ongoing communications with natural parents, follow-on activities with alumni, and relations with foreign government officials require that your organization maintain a year-round presence in participant countries, which will be referred to herein as the "in-country representative".

**c. Issuing DS-2019 Forms and Adherence to J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program Regulations**

All international participants will travel on a U.S. government designation for the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor program. Designate an Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) and a back-up for compliance with all relevant Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) requirements, including issuing DS-2019 forms for international participants and alternates; creating and updating participants' SEVIS status and maintaining all SEVIS records; and submitting placement and change of placement reports to ECA's Youth Programs Division's Responsible Officer. Provide assistance to ECA with SEVIS-related matters as requested.

**d. Program and Promotional Materials**

The recipient must design and develop materials that support all components of the program and inform and orient program constituents overseas and in the United States (i.e., application forms and resources; participant, host family, and school administrator handbooks; operational guidelines; pre-departure orientation (PDO) materials; etc.). ECA may request that additional program materials be developed as deemed necessary. Whenever possible, current materials should be amended to fit changing needs and circumstances overseas and in the United States.

See section C.13, Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients, for further detail.

**e. Online Presence**

*Social Media, Mobile Technologies, and Department of State Online Communities:* Your organization must dedicate staff to coordinate and maintain content for program websites and social media platforms that market the program; disseminate information to U.S. and foreign publics; serve as a secure participant application and resource tool for prospective applicants; and develop and implement strategies for the effective use of mobile technologies and other social media.

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

*Outreach Resources:* Support ECA promotional campaigns by providing information to ECA and updating promotional materials as needed.

Develop and implement a strategy to leverage mobile and online technologies and networks, and the Department's digital properties, in consultation with ECA's Program Office and in coordination with its Alumni Affairs and Web and Social Media teams, as appropriate. These should include ECA's International Exchange Alumni website, and other platforms that are key resources to promote the program, augment the impact of the in-person exchange, and engage program alumni.

*Online Communities:* All organization staff, program personnel, and regional and local volunteers associated with the YES and YES Abroad programs are expected to be knowledgeable about the Department of State's resources including but not limited to [alumni.state.gov](http://alumni.state.gov), and to facilitate member registration on the website.

**f. Personally Identifiable Information (PII)**

In the course of any activities involving the gathering and maintaining of records with personal information, develop and ensure appropriate protocols and processes to protect PII of individuals, including applicants, participants, alumni, host families, staff, and volunteers associated with the program. Ensure staff members who handle records containing PII receive PII safeguarding training and adhere to legal, regulatory, and Department of State policy requirements regarding privacy. Take appropriate action when you discover or suspect failure to follow the rules of behavior for handling PII. Conduct an administrative fact-finding review to obtain all pertinent information relating to a suspected or confirmed exposure of PII. Within 24 hours of any breach, notify and cooperate with ECA's Grants Office to properly escalate, refer, and respond to a data exposure.

**g. Medical Screening**

Arrange in-country medical assessment to ensure that participants are healthy and have immunizations necessary for program participation prior to leaving their home countries. Review medical documents in the United States to confirm that all requirements have been met. To the extent possible, identify and inform the ECA Program Office of pre-existing physical and mental health conditions that may have implications for insurability and participant support in the United States. Perform a special review carried out by a medical

doctor and including ECA staff to confirm that applicants with disabilities are medically fit to travel and to fully participate in the program.

**h. Travel**

Arrange roundtrip international airline tickets originating from participants' home communities to their host communities and assist with passports and visas. Arrange travel in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible and in accordance with the Fly America Act and all other U.S. Government (USG) travel regulations. Select and vet adult flight escorts for their ability to manage a group of teenage travelers and provide them training to ensure their competence and independence while traveling. When possible, you are encouraged to assign as escorts staff or alumni who can also serve as trainers and facilitators at orientations. Alternatively, escorts might attend meetings and/or engage in representational activities that support the YES and YES Abroad programs.

Develop detailed written standard travel procedures, with POs' input, for YES inbound participants. Procedures should detail how group flights are scheduled, how individual participants are assigned to a flight, how date-change requests from POs should be made, and how and when itineraries will be provided to POs. Travel must include domestic travel from and to locations that are outside main capital cities, i.e., full roundtrip itineraries. These procedures should also explain PO travel obligations, including the deadline by which arrival airport codes are due from the POs. Present a detailed description of the support provided to participants while they are en route, including airport staffing and emergency communication procedures.

Coordinate travel for participants who are unable, for any reason, to travel with an escorted group, including those who are repatriated prior to the end of the exchange. Budget for escorted travel of approximately ten (10) individual participants returning early from the YES inbound or YES Abroad programs when the escort is deemed necessary due to health, behavior, or security risk. Coordinate beginning and end-of-program travel dates prior to making commitments or contracts with travel agencies or program venues for both YES inbound and YES Abroad with ECA.

It is anticipated that participants (YES inbound and YES Abroad participants) may not all be covered under the same health benefits plan. In cases of serious family crises while on the exchange, such as the death of an immediate family member, some health benefit policies may offer coverage for emergency round-trip travel to the home location, while others do not. This health benefit will be used when available. Similar travel should be budgeted for approximately five (5) participants (not to exceed 1% of total participant numbers) who might face such a family crisis without this health benefit provision, and/or to supplement capped health benefits that are insufficient to cover the full cost of the emergency travel. In rare cases, this budget line may be used to support travel of a natural family member to be with the student in the case of life-threatening illness or accident. The recipient will coordinate with ECA on the precise circumstances that would be considered protocols for

this expense and language to be used to communicate the provision properly to partners and participant.

***Participant Travel Documents***

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

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

**i. Participant and Alumni Highlights**

Provide ECA timely reports of significant participant and alumni accomplishments demonstrating program impact.

**j. On-Program Participant Support Liaison**

Designate a staff member(s) as a “Participant Support Liaison” to serve as a point of contact for ECA on all YES inbound and YES Abroad student support issues. The liaison serves as a channel of communication between the POs and the Overseas Partners for YES participants.

**k. Support for Participants and Alumni with Disabilities**

Designate a staff member to have primary responsibility for working with participants with disabilities. The responsibilities of this person will include, but not be limited to, developing a strategy and staff expertise in recruiting and supporting participants and alumni with disabilities; providing resources and overseeing identification and procurement of reasonable accommodations (equipment, materials, and services); developing training opportunities for program implementers; and coordinating placement needs assessments for POs and participant orientation upon arrival.

**l. Communication of Participant Concerns**

Provide on-program support for YES Abroad participants and communication with natural families and overseas placement partners. For YES participants, in coordination with POs, provide communication about participants’ well-being to your in-country representatives and participants' natural parents. Efforts must correspond to the Federal Regulations as outlined in 22 CFR 62 and be closely coordinated with ECA. Report immediately to the ECA Participant Monitoring Unit any situation that affects the safety, health, or well-being of a participant, or any disciplinary action at the second warning/probation level that could ultimately result in the participant’s repatriation. Only the ECA Youth Programs Division can make the decision to terminate the program and repatriate a participant; under no circumstances will the organization, its employees, volunteers, or third parties acting on its behalf inform participants that they will terminate their program and repatriate them without specific directions from the ECA.

**m. Communication with Natural Families**

Communicate and liaise with the participants' natural families during the program year. A participant's family must be informed in a timely manner of problems that arise with the student, including academic deficiencies, behavioral concerns, health and safety issues, transfers to a new host family or school, and any situations that may necessitate early termination from the program. Provide on-program support for participants, staff, and volunteers in dealing with natural parents about student problems that arise during the program.

**n. Student Participant Likeness (Photo and Video) Usage**

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

**o. Alumni Engagement**

Provide opportunities and training for alumni to widely share their U.S. experience and skills learned on program and apply them at home. Organize and facilitate alumni activities that promote YES program goals and coordinate the participation and travel of alumni as needed. Maintain a database to track alumni that must be compatible with ECA's database systems and share alumni information with ECA's Alumni Office and respective U.S. Embassies/Consulates. Collaborate with organizations that may conduct other ECA-funded workshops or programs for YES participants or alumni. Inform participants/alumni about and provide instruction on registering on ECA's International Exchange Alumni website. Your organization's country representative should support alumni in maintaining or, where feasible, assist them in forming YES Alumni associations to help organize and expand their efforts.

***Coordination of Additional Alumni Opportunities***

Develop and provide additional activities, as resources allow, to keep alumni engaged with the Department and sharing their U.S. experience. These activities should include:

- 1) A small grants competition for which alumni may submit proposals for group and individual grants to execute a project that advances YES program goals in their home country. Alumni competitions should be publicized widely throughout all YES countries to reach as many alumni as possible.
- 2) YES alumni workshop(s) for competitively selected YES and YES Abroad alumni inbound as well as webinars and other online training resources that can reach larger alumni audiences. Such workshops and online resources should be developed on themes relevant to program goals or U.S. Department of State foreign policy objectives. When developing alumni workshops that are for small, select groups, follow-on plans should include sharing information learned to a larger alumni audience. Strategies may include but are not limited to written reports, presentations, and training-of-trainers activities. Workshops must have clear and substantive purposes, with measurable outcomes and results and clear follow-on activities.

- 3) Alumni photo and video contests to build a multimedia reserve to publicize and market the YES and YES Abroad programs.

**Information Management**

Maintain a participant placement information database accessible to ECA and POs that is compatible with ECA's database for quick uploading of information and tracks applicants through the stages of recruitment, selection as finalists, placement, and transition to alumni status. Regularly maintain and update for accurate report generation. Staff should only access records on a "need to know" basis and specific to their performance of their official duties. Database staff must not disclose sensitive PII to individuals or outside entities unless they are authorized to do so as part of their official duties and doing so is in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, and Department of State privacy policies. Data should not be corrected, altered, or updated in official records except, when necessary, as part of staff's official duties.

p. **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.

q. **Sub-award Management**

If sub-award recipients are involved, ensure they have received a copy of the parts of the solicitation that are relevant to their duties and are versed in all requirements, your organization's expectations, J-1 visa regulations, and OMB Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600. Provide oversight to sub-recipients to ensure quality performance of the duties covered in their sub-awards.

r. **Monitoring and Evaluation**

See Section C.6. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

***Specific Responsibilities for YES Inbound Program***

a. **Recruitment and Selection**

Develop an outreach plan that addresses U.S. mission goals and priorities. Outreach may be conducted at any time during the activity period of this award. Recruit and screen applicants and select YES finalists and alternates through an open, transparent, merit-based competition. Develop a standard recruitment and merit-based selection process to use in all countries and maintain statistics at each stage by country, region, and prior participation in ECA's English Access Program. Application forms used in all countries must be uniform except for country-specific requirements that should be kept separate from the standardized application form. Application fees are not allowable. The recruitment process must be open to make it possible for any student who meets the eligibility criteria to apply. You must demonstrate a plan for outreach and providing necessary accommodations in the recruitment of eligible individuals with disabilities. Participants with special needs (e.g.,

asthma, diabetes, etc.) should also be identified as should participants needing additional pre-program English language instruction.

Ensure that all finalists meet established age, academic, and English proficiency requirements to facilitate enrollment in U.S. high schools. Finalists must generally be citizens or permanent residents of the countries from which they are chosen. ECA must approve the selection of all non-citizens, including permanent residents, or provide general guidance to be followed in particular countries. Given budget constraints and/or security concerns, it may not be possible to conduct recruitment activities in all regions of each country. Devise contingency plans for recruitment in countries where challenging governments may impede the standard selection process.

In order to allow the POs sufficient time for placement, they should receive finalists' applications in winter 2025-26. For this reason, recruitment must begin as early as feasible. The recipient must work with each in-country representative to streamline activities and procedures in order to prepare finalist applications at the earliest date without diminishing the quality of selection.

*Criteria for YES Inbound Participants*

- 1) Citizen or a permanent resident of the country of application
- 2) Ages 15-18.5 at the program start date (specific age requirements may be set in each country based on local educational system restrictions)
- 3) Sufficient ability to speak and study in English; the recipient must be familiar with English language testing resources and general levels required for U.S. high school admission, and establish minimum test scores to be met by all selected participants
- 4) Preference will be given to applicants who have not previously studied in the United States or spent more than 50% of the last five years outside the country of application
- 5) Commitment to cultural immersion in the United States through a home-stay experience
- 6) Ability to meet cross-cultural challenges with maturity, humor, and an open mind
- 7) Plans for sharing their U.S. experience with their home school and community upon return home

**b. Recruitment and Support of Participants with Disabilities**

Recruit and provide necessary support and accommodation for approximately 20 participants with disabilities. Participants with disabilities must meet the same standards as all other applicants but may receive reasonable accommodations for testing. Implement a review process carried out by a medical doctor to adequately assess the unique needs of each student 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. Coordinate participant assignments with each PO to ensure that they have the resources and capacity to place and support the

participant(s). Provide each PO with written, detailed, and accurate support and accommodation needs assessment results for each participant prior to student travel. Serve as a resource through the year in providing funds for reasonable accommodations, guidance, and assistance to POs in meeting these participants' needs.

**c. Arrival Orientation(s) for Participants with Disabilities**

Plan and develop a separate arrival workshop and assessment event(s) to take place prior to the participants' arrival to their host communities, and that will include further professional review of each student to confirm and refine a support plan to be coordinated with each respective PO. Arrange associated travel for participants. The workshop will also present the history of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and resources available to people with disabilities in America and will provide independence training and tools for these participants. Coordinate dates and location with ECA, overseas implementers, and POs.

**d. Pre- and On-Program English Assistance**

Provide pre-program English language instruction and enhancement activities for countries where the standard of English instruction does not result in an adequate pool of qualified applicants. This pre-program English assistance also helps to ensure that the weaker language qualifications of participants from more remote areas will not preclude their selection. Coordinate with ECA and each respective U.S. Embassy recruitment plans and efforts to build on existing USG-funded English language programs for youth. Your proposal should suggest planned efforts to include these English-language participants in YES.

While all participants selected to come to the United States must successfully demonstrate English proficiency and pass with establish minimal English test results, it is anticipated that a small number may have difficulty with the immersion in their host community and classroom settings. Your organization must work with and provide funds to POs as appropriate for YES participants who the PO determines need additional English language support. Upon the request from the PO, you will coordinate with them to develop a plan for individualized instruction to meet each participant's specific needs.

**e. 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. Your organization must work with the U.S. Embassy in each country to ensure timely processing of U.S. visas for all participants. Collect and process all student data in the SEVIS and prepare DS-2019 forms for finalists and alternates. Maintain and update SEVIS records as required, including appropriate finalization of SEVIS records when participants' programs end and for those who do not ultimately participate. Data on participants must also be submitted to ECA's database.

**f. Coordination of Participant Information and PO Assignment**

Develop and implement a plan for the equitable, transparent, and timely distribution of finalist documentation to the POs, taking into consideration such factors as sex, age, country

of origin, need for English language instruction, and disabilities. Ensure that host family and school placement information is available to overseas implementers. Throughout the exchange, in coordination with POs, oversee informational changes in school or family addresses and local coordinator assignments in the program database. Your organization will be responsible for reporting such changes within ten days to ECA or as stipulated by the J-1 regulations.

**g. Pre-Departure Orientations (PDOs)**

Provide uniform PDOs to prepare participants for life in the United States. Uniformity is essential because it reinforces participants' identity as participants in a U.S. government scholarship program and enables the dissemination of information, policies, and procedures critical to their success. PDO topics should include sessions on living with a host family, U.S. high school education culture and customs, student safety resources, sexual harassment 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. In countries where your organization cannot conduct pre-departure orientation sessions due to security concerns, make provisions for these orientations to be conducted by U.S. Embassy staff, in a neighboring country, or, with the agreement of ECA, in the United States immediately after the participants arrive. Provide orientations for the natural parents prior to the participants' departure for the United States.

h. Distribute PO-specific materials prior to or during the PDOs.

**i. ECA Academic Year Programs Meeting**

Participate with at least one to two program representatives in the ECA academic year programs Annual Meeting to be held for two days in Washington, DC.

**j. End-of Year Re-Entry Support**

Develop and implement re-entry resource materials and activities that address topics of reverse culture shock, the U.S. Department of State's alumni programs, potential programs provided by U.S. embassies, in-country alumni programs, and skills and leadership development for becoming effective YES alumni.

***Specific Responsibilities for YES Abroad Program***

**a. U.S. Marketing**

Develop and implement a comprehensive and robust outreach and marketing plan for recruitment; a program and application website; and printed informational materials, handbooks, etc. Outreach may be conducted at any time during the activity period of this award. Provide informational materials to POs upon request. (Although POs are not responsible for recruitment, ECA encourages them to distribute information and materials about the YES Abroad program.)

**b. YES-specific Staff/Volunteer Training and Orientation**

Ensure that all overseas implementing staff and volunteers who have regular contact with the participants have undergone screening for suitability and are trained. This training should be designed to provide the methods and tools necessary for monitoring, supporting, and counseling YES Abroad participants, their host families, and school personnel with sensitivity to cross-cultural issues unique to this exchange population. The training must ensure understanding of the goals, expectations, and requirements of the YES Abroad program. Ensure the proper reporting procedures are developed and that staff and volunteers understand their roles in communication participant and placement concerns that may arise.

**c. Recruitment**

Develop an extensive, nationwide recruitment and a merit-based selection process that seeks to achieve a strong applicant pool from across the United States; and maintain statistics at all levels.

**d. Selection**

Implement a fair and objective multi-stage process of evaluating applications and selecting participants.

*Criteria for YES Abroad Participants*

- 1) U.S. citizen
- 2) At least 15 years of age but not more than 18.5 years of age as of the program start date (age range eligibility may be narrower depending upon specific country high school and Ministry of Education requirements)
- 3) May not be a family member of U.S. Department of State employees or a family member of award recipient employees whose official duties involve ECA Youth Programs Division-funded programs
- 4) Demonstrated maturity, good character, and scholastic aptitude
- 5) Commitment to cultural immersion in a host culture through a home-stay experience
- 6) Interest in learning the predominant language of the host culture
- 7) Ability to meet cross-cultural challenges with maturity, humor, and an open mind
- 8) Ability to develop and articulate ideas and plans for sharing their overseas experience in their U.S. home school and community

**e. Pre-Exchange Student Resources**

Develop and distribute language and cultural resource packets for finalists upon notification of acceptance into the program. Materials should outline the goals and requirements of the YES Abroad program.

**f. Passports and Visas**

Obtain all required documents from finalists and alternates in a timely way and facilitate their passport and visa application processes to the greatest extent possible to ensure they have the required travel documents to travel on-time.

**g. Pre-Departure Orientations**

Provide pre-departure orientations prior to the participants' departures from their home countries. Orient host institutions, staff, families, and participants about the purpose and the foreign policy context for the YES Abroad program, as well as its goals and expectations, rules, and practical information. The orientation should include an introduction to personal and cultural adjustment issues, as well as prepare participants to have an awareness of and sensitivity to aspects of their host cultures that will require their adaptation. Train host country support staff to communicate cultural differences that Americans must navigate to have a successful exchange. The pre-departure preparation should also include a general political, historical, educational, and cultural introduction to the host countries; information related specifically to the objectives and themes of the program; and practical/administrative information. Prepare participants for encountering a variety of interpretations of U.S. policy positions and interpretations of U.S. history while living abroad.

**h. Participant Tax Liabilities**

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

**i. School Enrollment**

Identify and enroll participants in private or public high schools that enroll a high proportion of host country nationals and are accredited by the Ministry of Education of the host country. Your budget may include costs for tuition, room, and board in dormitories, if needed, with prior approval from ECA. If the only appropriate school requires dormitory living during the week, participants may be placed in this setting; however, in such cases, the in-country implementer must identify a suitable family who can consistently host the student on weekends and holidays to allow the student to have a host family experience.

**j. Host Family Placement and Orientation**

***Host Family Selection:***

Develop a plan for monitoring participants' safety and welfare that parallels, to the extent possible, the standards for J-1 visa regulations for international academic year participants found in 22 CFR 62. This includes, among other points, the identification and use of appropriate means of verifying the integrity and suitability of each host family.

Your budget may include reasonable stipend payments to host families to cover actual costs of food and expenses incurred by hosting a student. The location (city) and neighborhood of host-family and/or dormitory housing arrangements must be approved by the PDS of the relevant U.S. embassy and by ECA. Provide an orientation for host families before the participants' arrival that covers program goals and policies as well as cultural information to facilitate adjustment and communications across cultures.

**Host Family Orientation:** Prior to the participants' arrival, conduct an in-person 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.) Host family orientations should not include other non-YES host families to ensure that adequate attention is given to YES program-related and cross-cultural issues.

**k. Placement Reports**

Provide ECA with confirmation of Embassies' concurrence with general school and housing placement strategy and locale well in advance of program and prior to significant engagement with prospective host families and schools. Provide ECA with a detailed electronic placement report, including plotted country placement maps, prior to YES Abroad participants' departures, including names of all YES Abroad participants and host country, their host family names and addresses, name of host school, and language of instruction.

**l. Arrival Orientation, Including Safety and Security Briefing**

Organize an in-country arrival orientation within one month of the participants' arrival. The orientation should address program policies, procedures, and rules, as well as the implementing 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 the host country. The orientations must ensure understanding of the goals, expectations, and requirements of the YES Abroad program as explained in this document.

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

**m. In-Country Language Program**

Evaluate the language needs for participants in each country and provide language instruction that will support participants in school, with host families, and in the community. Provide YES Abroad participants with a minimum two-week intensive language program upon arrival in country. Include continued language and cultural education courses throughout the duration of the program as needed. Participants must be offered individual language tutoring beyond the first semester if needed and/or requested. Funding may be requested for tutors/instructors, meeting space, participants' travel and lodging to language courses if necessary, and language learning materials and on-line courses and other resources.

**n. Enhancement Activities**

Design, plan, and implement an intensive and substantive extracurricular enhancement program for YES Abroad participants on the concepts of mutual understanding, leadership development, and community service. Engage participants in community service activities during the program. Prepare, encourage, and track participants' sharing of their experiences after returning to the United States. Where possible, participants should interact with YES alumni, English Access Program participants, and peers at American Spaces.

**o. Participant Support and Monitoring**

During the program, maintain, at a minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the YES Abroad participants and host families. Ensure the schools have contact information for the local organization representative and the program sponsor's main office. Provide ECA with immediate reports of all situations that affect the safety, health, or well-being of participants and a monthly summary of each student's adjustment, activities, and well-being. Develop reporting systems that include at minimum: 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 survey that participants are required to complete and submit themselves. The type of system and detailed questions are left to the discretion of the organization but must be cleared through ECA.

Immediately report to ECA any incident or allegation involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation, harassment, or abuse of an exchange student participant. Inform ECA promptly of any serious problem or controversy that could be expected to bring the U.S. Department of State or the exchange program into notoriety or disrepute.

Ensure that in-country representatives have a plan for monitoring participants on a regular basis and provide adequate support and guidance to participants during their programs. All in-country representatives must maintain, at a minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the participant and regular, monthly contact with the host family, addressing legitimate concerns in a timely fashion and apprising ECA in a timely manner about significant issues. All records and data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and be provided to ECA upon request.

**p. Mid-Year and End-of-Year Orientation**

Plan and implement participant Mid-Year and End-of-Year orientations in each country to monitor participants' progress; address participants' needs appropriate to the timing of each event; and provide additional leadership skills, teambuilding, and enhancement activities.

**Mid-Year Orientation:** Arrange a mid-year orientation to meet with all YES Abroad participants approximately halfway through their exchange programs. The purpose of this meeting is to assess their progress in achieving program and personal goals and to provide the necessary assistance to enable them to meet these goals. Discuss participants'

experiences so far on the exchanges to reinforce cultural understanding and expectations. As appropriate, the mid-year orientation is a time to review and update communication protocols, program policies, rules, and procedures, as well as health and safety protocols and resources.

***End-of-Year Orientation:*** Prepare participants for bringing closure to their exchange experiences as well as re-entry to their home communities. Ensure that they receive relevant information concerning YES Abroad program alumni resources and opportunities and discuss individual plans for possible alumni projects.

q. **Health Benefits**

Enroll YES Abroad participants in ECA's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (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 each YES Abroad participant with a cell phone and minutes for use in emergencies.

s. **Stipends**

Provide each YES Abroad participant with a monthly stipend of up to \$125, depending on the local cost of living, for pocket money, incidentals, and other expenses.

6. **Goals and Objectives.**

The overall goals of the YES programs are to:

- Support U.S. national security interests by promoting increased understanding by emerging leaders from the selected countries and the United States about the host societies, institutions, values, and culture;
- Foster lasting personal and professional ties that will enhance U.S. economic development opportunities and job readiness;
- Advance participants' leadership skills and an understanding of civil society during the exchange experience and beyond; and,
- Enhance cross-cultural understanding of other countries and cultures among American host communities and improve realistic understanding of American values in host and alumni communities abroad, further supporting U.S. national security interests.

The following outcomes will indicate a successful exchange:

- Inbound participants acquire an understanding of the key elements of American culture and society, including concepts such as volunteerism, and an awareness of and respect for the rule of law. Conversely, YES Abroad participants will acquire an understanding of their host cultures and societies;
- Participants will share their home country and cultures with their host communities;
- Participants will actively engage with their host schools and communities and develop enduring ties;

- As alumni, participants will apply leadership skills gained during the exchange by initiating community service and education projects; and
- Participants will utilize leadership skills and cross-cultural competencies to best position themselves for career entry and job readiness.

## 7. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

Distinct from grants or cooperative agreement monitoring and participant monitoring, performance monitoring is designed to assess progress against a program's goals and objectives. A performance monitoring framework is vital to tracking the direction, pace, and magnitude of change that result from ECA programs.

ECA created the Monitoring Data for ECA (MODE) Framework to measure the performance of ECA programs. **The MODE Framework provides standard indicators and corresponding survey questions to ensure consistent measures across all ECA programs.** More resources and guidance documents on the MODE Framework are available online at:

<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>.

The proposal must include the MODE Framework objectives and indicators listed below (note that, because not all MODE objectives and indicators are relevant for a program, the numbering below will not be sequential). In addition to the ECA-required objectives and indicators, applicants may also select additional MODE Framework indicators (see the *Indicator Book* on the MODE Framework website), or design custom objectives and indicators that are specific to the proposed program and this proposal.

Demographic Questions as outlined in the *Indicator Book* on page vi, and *Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)* (<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>)

Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective

- Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities
  - E1.1.01 Percent of participants reporting that their program experience offered opportunities to engage with other cultures
  - E1.1.04: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government (core indicator)
  - E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator)
  - E1.1.10: Percent of foreign participants who traveled to the United States for the first time during their program (core indicator)
  - E1.1.11: Percent of American participants indicating a change in their understanding of their host country's culture and values
  - E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American people (core indicator)

- E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator)
- E1.1.19: Percent of foreign participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator)

Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities/countries

- E2.0.01: Percent of foreign participants that volunteer in their host communities
- E2.0.04: Number of hours that foreign participants spend volunteering in their host communities
- Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster participant's belief that civic engagement benefits communities/countries
  - E2.2.01: Percent of participants who have more confidence in their ability to have an impact in their home country (core indicator)

Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions

- E3.0.02: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of Americans (core indicator)
- E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)

Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries

- E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation
- E4.0.09: Percent of participants reporting an increase in language skills as a result of their program participation
- Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
  - E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
  - E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts (core indicator)
  - Objective 8: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau's resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships
  - E8.0.03: Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

### **Performance Monitoring Plans (PMPs)**

ECA recommends the use of a PMP to serve as the primary reference document for performance monitoring for this award. If used, the PMP is an important part of any proposal, as it outlines how the applicant plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions. A PMP document that includes all MODE Framework indicators is a part of this solicitation's attachments. Specific instructions on how to modify the PMP to be responsive to this solicitation are included in that document. While ECA recommends the applicant use the PMP format provided, this is not a requirement. A training on how to complete a PMP is available here: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>.

If a PMP is not included in the proposal, applicants should provide similar information to that found in the suggested PMP format, in a presentation of your choice. Successful PMPs (or similar documentation) should include the following:

- **Objectives.** Programmatic objectives are statements of the condition(s) that state what the program is designed to achieve. Objectives are therefore bound by the resources and timeframe of the program and must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART; see the ECA Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Innovation (MELI) Unit's pages on the ECA website for more information: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-evaluation-division/capacity-building>). In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the MODE Framework, the Functional Bureau Strategy (<https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau>), or other applicant-designed program-specific objectives.
- **Indicators.** Performance indicators are measures used to gauge progress toward programmatic objectives and sub-objectives. Indicators should be as specific as possible (following the SMART principles) and include any proposed disaggregations (meaning, breakdowns of the data by subgroups; the PMP lists the demographic questions required to obtain the information necessary to report the disaggregations). Each indicator should also include a target number to be achieved. A target is a planned level of result to be achieved within an explicit timeframe.
  - If you do not use the PMP format provided, note that any performance monitoring reference document the applicant submits should include the information in the column headers (Indicator Name, Definition, Target, Survey Question, etc.) in the PMP attachment at a minimum.
  - In addition to those indicators outlined in above, the applicant may propose additional custom, program-specific indicators in the PMP (ECA recommends the proposed PMPs include a minimum of one indicator for each custom programmatic objective).
  - During the period of performance of the award, the ECA program office may further revise, add, or remove indicators. Therefore, the applicant's PMP and data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established.

Award recipients are responsible for collecting indicator data only on participant outcomes during the period of performance of the award itself (see the PMP for guidelines as to when these data collection efforts should occur). ECA will measure outcomes of ECA participants at one, three, five, and 10 years after the exchange has ended to capture the long-term outcomes of ECA programming unless otherwise specified in the NOFO. In this instance, the recipient will be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to de-duplicate questions and minimize potential survey fatigue.

Regardless of the survey platform used, **all** MODE Framework survey questions outlined above are **required** (i.e., should be forced response); please see the Consent Language in the MODE Framework *Indicator Book* for more information on how to convey this to participants/survey respondents.

### **Program Performance M&E Narrative**

Proposals should include information within the program narrative section(s) that outlines how the applicant intends to measure the indicators listed above. This will be separate from the PMP and should include but not be limited to:

- An overview of resources available to the applicant that outline the team structure and responsibilities surrounding performance monitoring.
- The mechanism(s) through which surveys and other data collection tools (if applicable) will be administered, including which platform will be used, and when and how surveys will be advertised to participants – detailing strategies to ensure adequate survey response rates ([https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/eca\\_eval\\_division\\_survey\\_response\\_rates.pdf](https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/eca_eval_division_survey_response_rates.pdf)), and to reduce selection and non-response bias.
- A brief explanation of data analysis and reporting procedures.
- An overview of a proposed learning plan and feedback loops to ensure that the Grant Officer (GO)/Grant Officer Representative (GOR) are informed on performance monitoring issues at regular intervals.

### **Nonmandatory Use of the Qualtrics MODE Survey Builder Data Collection System**

ECA has created a guided tool (the MODE Survey Builder) within the Qualtrics survey platform for ECA implementing partners to generate surveys to facilitate the seamless collection and reporting of MODE Framework data. The MODE Survey Builder offers implementing partners a guided workflow that will generate a ready-to-send MODE survey, allows the addition of custom survey questions, and offers a standard report template for a quick overview of survey results that can be submitted in MyGrants (see section below) to fulfill RPM Reporting Requirements. Use of the Qualtrics survey platform can be utilized at no cost to implementing partners.

Additional information about the MODE Survey Builder can be found here:

<https://app.box.com/s/jjr98hmx6deorxj3lwgaxjrwdfec2r91> and here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jus4fRqOTcM>. You can propose use of an alternate survey tool or use the MODE Survey Builder, but if you are utilizing the MODE Survey Builder, you must indicate such in your proposal.

### **MyGrants RPM Reporting Requirements**

MyGrants is a database solution that serves as the official system of record for all U.S. Department of State and ECA awards. The Results Performance Monitoring (RPM) module within MyGrants is an extension module that enables users to report performance monitoring data in the same system where they currently manage federal assistance actions. As part of ECA's efforts to streamline data collection and management, the recipient(s) of this award will be required to input performance reporting data outlined in this solicitation into the MyGrants RPM. The data stored in the MyGrants RPM will provide ECA with a bureau-wide, uniform M&E reporting tool that is already linked with other elements of the awards familiar to existing awardees.

### **8. Allowable Costs.**

Budgets may include, but are not limited to, the following items:

- a. Overseas infrastructure and non-participant support costs
- b. Program materials (an explanation of how materials are used must be included in the proposal)
- c. Promotional materials, including social media and website development and maintenance. Proposals must provide examples and substantive justification for promotional requests and show how the funds will advance marketing needs specific to the programs. General, ongoing promotion and marketing expenses of the organization may not be requested as a direct cost.
- d. U.S. and overseas recruitment and selection costs
- e. Medical and mental health assessment and screening processes for potential finalist/alternative candidates
- f. International and domestic travel for participants, staff, and volunteers as needed to conduct and support program requirements. International travel for staff should be limited to what is essential for the success of the program, and detailed justification of such must be included in the Budget Narrative.
- g. Emergency escort travel funds for approximately 10 participants (inbound and YES Abroad) who may require escorts home, including for cases of early return. (ECA must approve each case where this is used.)
- h. An emergency fund for of approximately \$75 per YES and YES Abroad participant (not limited to \$75 per cost associated with an individual participant) to cover unanticipated costs that may arise. (Establish a general protocol and guideline with ECA for accepting such requests and obtain ECA's approval in each case over \$500.)
- i. Emergency travel funds for approximately five YES and YES Abroad participants who may need to return home temporarily for a family crisis, such as the death of an immediate family member, when not covered by insurance. The fund may also cover travel for an immediate family member to join the participant in the case that the student suffers a life-threatening illness or injury. (Establish a general protocol for accepting such requests for return travel and obtain ECA's approval in each case.)
- j. Salaries, communications, and supplies
- k. Promotional material, including website development and maintenance
- l. Alumni activities
- m. Necessary passport costs if participants are financially unable to pay, and visa costs for American participants (U.S. visa fees are waived for YES inbound participants on J-1 visas.)
- n. Reasonable accommodations funds to be provided to POs upon request to support participants with disabilities and additional English language tutoring and resources, as needed

For YES inbound, the following items should be included in the budget submission as part of the per-participant costs:

- a. Stipends and honoraria for non-salaried staff and volunteers
- b. Roundtrip participant transportation from their homes to the U.S. embassy or consulate for visa interviews

- c. Increasing the capacity of award recipient's U.S. staff, or domestic and overseas partner organizations to manage program responsibilities
- d. Public relations efforts and other activities that promote the expansion of YES specific recruitment and hosting capacity
- e. Regional or national workshops for participants/alumni that focus on YES program themes
- f. Specially-skilled consultants who support cross-cultural communication and understanding. These consultants may provide training for award recipient staff and volunteers and/or develop printed and online resource materials that support the unique cultural needs of YES participants; offer services such as on-call resources for staff, volunteers, host and natural families; and provide additional student support.

For YES Abroad, the following items should be included in the budget submission as part of the per-participant costs:

- a. Incidentals allowance: YES Abroad host families can be compensated \$300 for school start-up costs and other school-related expenses. Receipts must be presented to the implementing organization for reimbursement.
- b. Emergency fund: Based on a rate of \$100 per participant to be used for small emergency expenses, e.g., eyeglasses, minor dental problems, non-reclaimable student debt, etc.
- c. Enhancement activities fund: Award recipients should plan significant program enhancements and budget based on a rate of \$400 per student.
- d. Monthly stipends consistent with the local in-country cost of living for an average teenager of up to approximately \$125 each per YES Abroad participant.
- e. Stipends for host families based on actual expenses may be requested if the cultural and economic conditions in an otherwise viable country prohibit the identification of appropriate host families. The request will be subject to ECA and Post review and approval.
- f. Costs associated with participant monitoring, troubleshooting, counseling, and resettling participants, as necessary
- g. Emergency escort travel funds for a reasonable estimation of participants who may require escorts home, including for cases of early return. (ECA must approve each case where this is used.)
- h. Emergency travel funds for up to three participants who may need to return home temporarily for a family crisis, such as the death of an immediately family member when not covered by insurance. (Establish a general protocol for accepting such requests for return travel and obtain ECA's approval in each case.)
- i. School tuition and fees, if necessary
- j. Minimum two-week language instruction
- k. Tax withholding, as determined necessary, for YES Abroad participants

## **9. Cost Share.**

ECA encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved

agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution may be reduced in like proportion.

#### **10. Freedom and Democracy Guidelines.**

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

#### **11. Virtual Exchange Component.**

When changing political, health, environmental, or other similar circumstances require a suspension or halt of in-person activities and where ECA determines that a virtual alternative is appropriate and viable, award recipients should demonstrate the ability and capacity to transition from in-person to virtual exchanges.

In addition to planning for virtual exchange activities if in-person programming is prohibited, ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s) is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project-by-project basis.

#### **12. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients.**

All ECA Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

Coordinate all program and promotional material development with and obtain clearances from ECA prior to publication and distribution. Unless a waiver is granted, materials will display the American flag and the U.S. Department of State seal. The Bureau will retain copyright use of and may distribute materials related to these programs. Your organization must also communicate with POs and ECA to coordinate information for program websites.

### **13. Celebration of America’s Semiquincentennial.**

ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as “America250” – a truly global celebration. As the period of performance for this award is scheduled to cover part or all of calendar year (CY) 2026, the applicant may wish to consider ways the program can celebrate America250. Any America250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided America250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

### **14. Substantial Involvement.**

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

The responsibilities of ECA may include the following:

- Requesting periodic and unscheduled reports on participants’ status and placement details, activities, accomplishments, and well-being.
- Participating in the YES program implementers’ workshop with recipient and its U.S. and overseas representatives (see responsibility of the award recipient #6).
- Coordinating the participation of YES and YES Abroad participants and alumni in appropriate U.S. Department of State activities with the awardee; coordinating media coverage and outreach as appropriate to amplify alumni success in the U.S. and abroad.
- Storing YES and YES Abroad participant biographical data, placement data, and alumni contact information.
- Determining YES and YES Abroad recruitment strategies.
- Providing guidance and clearance on geographical location and type of schools for YES Abroad participants.

U.S. Embassy involvement varies by country and as the level of oversight deemed necessary by ECA and U.S. embassy personnel changes. The list below contains activities that the U.S. embassy may or may not elect to undertake, in agreement with ECA. The applicant and its partners and representatives in each country must be responsive to U.S. embassies’ requests and at a minimum follow the guidelines explained above in Section C.4.a: U.S. Department of State and Embassy Liaison and Consultation under the “Responsibilities of the Award Recipient” in establishing a strong working relationship with the U.S. embassy in each country. U.S. embassies’ responsibilities may include:

- Advising on YES inbound recruitment.
- Requesting updates on participants identified in on-program support cases.
- Requesting YES and YES Abroad participant biographical data, YES Abroad placement data, and YES inbound alumni contact information.

- Providing guidance and clearance on geographical location and type of schools for YES Abroad participants.
- Coordinating with in-country representatives on inclusion of YES Abroad participants and YES alumni in appropriate embassy activities; assisting in or coordination of media coverage as appropriate.

Note that there is often similarity in ECA's and embassies' roles, e.g., where ECA provides general guidance, embassies may assist in refining the guidance for in-country needs and applications, or ECA may have oversight of activities in the United States, whereas embassies may provide further support and oversight of similar activities in-country. Whenever guidance received by ECA and a U.S. embassy appears to conflict, the recipient will notify and consult with ECA's Program Office for clarification and resolution. ECA will make all final decisions for program guidance.

## D. Application Contents and Format

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

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

### 1. Budget Format.

Applicants must submit a budget (SF-424A), detailed line-item budget, and a budget narrative.

There must be detailed budgets and budget narratives for each sub-award partner, if proposed. Please indicate the number of participants funded by country as well as each country's domestic operating costs. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

### ***Overall Cost Efficiencies***

It is anticipated that differing conditions (e.g., geography and country size, scope of outreach, available resources, application volume, and security concerns) in the countries participating in the program will require different strategies for outreach and recruitment, use of resources, orientations and workshops, alumni support, and many other aspects of programming overseas. Your organization should establish cost guidelines and standards to help individual country teams develop plans and budgets that are cost effective and focused on the primary objectives of recruiting and preparing participants for the international exchange and supporting alumni.

### ***Guidelines***

- a. Large-scale selection events or activities with significant travel and program costs should be limited to 200% of the final selection number.

- b. Fee-based testing mechanisms for selection processes should be limited to 500% of the final selection number. (Simpler, recruiter-developed testing processes could supplant the expense of using outside test providers when culling large applicant numbers in initial recruitment stages.)
- c. Establishment of internal funding guidelines. In developing and reviewing country budgets, ensure that there is relative consistency and similarity in programs and activities, and that large deviations in cost or level of activity from the average are justified and reasonable.

### ***Budget Narrative***

The budget narrative should include at minimum:

- a. Formulae used to calculate totals unless clearly noted in the “description” field of the budget (e.g., travel and per diem costs for multiple people; training materials and expenses based on participant number);
- b. Supportive explanation and justification for activities and expenses determined essential, but that may not be understood from the “description” field or from the proposal narrative (e.g., security expenses, unique training, recruitment testing, or support needs due to country-specific conditions, etc.); and
- c. Breakdown of costs associated with relatively high amount line-item requests that may be unclear (e.g., if requesting \$50K for “training materials,” or \$100K for “public relations,” you must provide justification as well as an itemized breakdown).

Please refer to the PSI in the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

## **2. Content of Application.**

Please see the PSI for information about the application and formatting guidelines.

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

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

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov> or from ECA website at <https://www.state.gov/eca-grant-opportunities/>.

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

For questions about this announcement, contact: Katherine David-Fox, U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C/PY/I, 202-679-4754, David-FoxKO@State.gov.

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

#### **Required Registrations**

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov.

A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from this NOFO.

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

***Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. 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.

All federal award recipients must maintain a current registration in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) until all program and financial activity and reporting is completed on any issued award. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:  
<https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>

#### **Exemptions**

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

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing 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. Required Registration with MyGrants.**

All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's MyGrants system by accessing <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com> and clicking the "create an account" link. MyGrants is the U.S. Department of State's grants management system and is supported by the Department's Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). Recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories that have previously used MyGrants as a U.S. Department of State award

recipient do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact the ILMS Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Recipient Organizations and recipient contacts and signatories is available 24 hours, 7 days a week (except federal holidays), and can be reached at 1-888-313-ILMS (4567) or through the ILMS Self Service Portal at <https://afsism.servicenow.com/ilms/>.

## **5. Submission Instructions.**

### **Method of Submission**

Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the “Search Grants” portion of the system.

### **Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures**

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

### **How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov**

Applicants should read instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

The registration process can take up to four weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines. Applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov. Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration>.

### **How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov**

For access to complete instruction on how to apply for Notice of Funding Opportunities on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants>

### **Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues**

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission issues to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays.

Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

## **6. Submission Dates and Times.**

**Application Deadline Date****Friday, August 15, 2025, 11:59 P.M. EST**

Applicants have until 11:59 p.m., Washington, DC time, of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after the application deadline date and time will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system and will be found technically ineligible.

**Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.**

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant Grants.gov Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When ECA successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgement of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Please also be mindful of any Grants.gov generated error messages that may appear during the application process as they may result in some documents not transmitting correctly.

Applicants using slow internet should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "Applicant FAQs" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

**PLEASE NOTE:** ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov. Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if

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

**It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal (<https://www.grants.gov>) to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.**

## **7. Funding Restrictions for this Announcement.**

### **a. Funding Restrictions for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)**

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

### **b. Prohibition on Funding Activities that Encourage Mass-Migration Caravans towards the United States Southwest Border**

None of the funds awarded under this grant may be made available to encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass-migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. Funds may not be made available for legal counseling on the United States asylum process; and/or for referrals to legal or representation in the United States.

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

### **c. Palestinian Authority, West Bank, and Gaza Programming**

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

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact Katherine David-Fox, U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C/PY/I, by telephone 202-679-4754, or e-mail [David-FoxKO@State.gov](mailto:David-FoxKO@State.gov) for additional information.

## **8. Certification Regarding Compliance with applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws**

If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this NOFO will be within the United States, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:

- 1) Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code and;
- 2) It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

**9. Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements.**

Applicants are advised that institutions of higher education (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.

**10. Other Submission Requirements.**

- Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov.
- All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed line-item budget, and budget narrative.
- Key Personnel  
ECA recommends that the applicant identify intended key personnel positions via an asterisk (\*) or other marking in the proposal budget, budget narrative, or a separate appendix. If not provided in the application, recipients must submit the names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Applicants should also identify what proportion of their time will be used in support of the program. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions.
- Intergovernmental Review of Applications  
Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

## **F. Application Review Information**

### **1. Review Process.**

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

All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office before being reviewed by an ECA grant panel. Applications may also be reviewed by PDSs overseas, State Department regional bureaus, or other State Department offices, as appropriate. All reviewers, including the ECA grant panels, will review any eligible proposals based on the criteria below.

Proposals recommended by an ECA grant panel will be reviewed for compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and assessed for risk. Final funding decisions are made by the ECA's Assistant Secretary. Only an ECA Grant Officer has the final authority to issue assistance awards.

## **2. Review Criteria.**

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

- a. **Quality of the Program Idea and Planning:** The proposal should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to ECA's mission and the purposes outlined in the solicitation. A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate the ability to ensure that the proposed project accomplishes the stated objectives in the desired timeframe. The proposal should demonstrate how participants will be recruited, selected, monitored, trained, and prepared for their role as YES and YES Abroad alumni. The level of creativity, resources, and effectiveness will be primary factors for review. The proposal should be clearly and accurately written, with sufficient, relevant detail.
- b. **Organization's Record/Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program's goals. Reviewers will assess the applicant and its partners to determine if they offer adequate resources, expertise, and experience to fulfill program objectives. Partner activities should be clearly defined. The proposal should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting and J-1 visa requirements for past ECA grants as determined by ECA grant staff. The proposal should include a description of your organization's management of the impact on exchange program administration resulting from the global pandemic. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants for this program. In addition, organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors must include a discussion of their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper

maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting, and other requirements. The proposal that fails to include the above information in their narrative will be deemed less or not competitive under this review criterion. ECA will review the record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq. of organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors as one factor in assessing the record/ability of organizations to carry out successful exchange programs.

- c. **Multiplier Effect/Impact:** Proposed activities should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual ties both during the exchange and after the participants return home. The proposal should provide a plan for continued contact with alumni to ensure that they are tracked over time, utilized and/or organized as alumni, and provided opportunities to reinforce and share with others the knowledge and skills they acquired on the exchange.
- d. **Participant Monitoring:** The proposal narrative must include a detailed monitoring plan for YES Abroad participants, given the importance the Department places on participant well-being. You may use the appendices to provide additional details and supporting documentation.
- e. **Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Proposals should have a fully developed M&E plan that includes goals, objectives, and indicators. The plan should be feasible and aligned with the M&E section of this solicitation. Proposals should include a realistic learning plan that outlines how your organization plans to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices. All submitted M&E plans will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided at least the required information outlined in the M&E section of this solicitation and demonstrated the applicant's capacity to carry out the M&E plan.
- f. **Cost-Effectiveness:** Budgets must be accurate, clear, and cost-effective. Applicants must include a budget narrative, which is separate from the proposal narrative that clarifies formulas used and costs that require further explanation and/or justification. Detailed budgets are required, and separate budgets and budget narratives should be included for sub-awards. Applicants must ensure the budget is appropriate and sufficient to complete tasks outlined in the project narrative. The overhead costs of the program, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. The proposal should maximize cost sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions. The proposal should demonstrate a high quality, cost-effective program.

### **3. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov.**

The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider (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 will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

## G. Award Notices

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal ECA procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from an authorized Grants Officer in ECA's Grants Division. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by a Grants Officer and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer (as identified in the application) for review and countersignature. The recipient may only start incurring project expenses beginning on the start date shown on the fully signed award document.

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

### **Unsuccessful applicants:**

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition following the completion of the review process.

### **Payment Method:**

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

## 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.

The Department of State will review and consider proposals for funding pursuant to this NOFO in accordance with OMB guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, including the following:

- [Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#) (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
  - 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).
- [2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT](#)
- [2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION](#)
- [2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS](#)
- [2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE \(FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE\)](#)
- [2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY](#)
- [2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS](#)
- [U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#)

## 2. Reporting.

Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The FAA will specify how often these reports must be submitted. All reports must be submitted in a timely manner. For planning purposes, applicants can expect to provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

- a. **Performance Progress Reports (PPRs)** shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual, quarterly, or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. All reports and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this award in MyGrants.
- b. The **Federal Financial Reports** (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms->

repository/post-award-reporting-forms. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the recipient must upload the approved report to MyGrants, in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the recipient's eligibility for future awards.

- c. Required **MODE data** (see Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation section) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. MODE data reporting shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. The frequency of these reports will be determined by ECA/P/MELI and the Program Officer. Either a standard report template (if using the MODE Survey Builder) or aggregate data and the raw data file (if Recipient uses their own survey platform) must be uploaded by the Recipient as an RPM Performance Report under the corresponding record for this award in MyGrants.
- d. A **final program and financial report** no more than 120 days after the period of performance of the award ends or termination of the award.
- e. If any additional required reports will be needed and will be requested on the EX/G Memo for inclusion in the final award these should be listed here.
- f. **Program Data Requirements:** Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with ECA as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:
  1. Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
  2. Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three workdays prior to the official opening of the activity.

## I. Other Information

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

ECA places critically important emphasis on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The award recipient will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation  
U.S. Department of State  
SA-5, Floor C2, Room C2L13  
2200 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20522