

PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

FY 2026 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders (YALI Fellowship)

Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017991

Office of Academic Exchange Programs, Study of the U.S. Branch

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued by the Study of the U.S. Branch located in the Office of Academic Exchange Programs for the FY 2026 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders (YALI Fellowship). Proposals must conform to the solicitation, the guidelines in this document, and the standard Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Any application not adhering to these conditions may be deemed technically ineligible.

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

I. STATEMENT OF WORK

Recipient Responsibilities:

The recipient organization will be responsible for the following:

General Program Management

1. Upon award, work directly with the FY 2024 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders award recipient to facilitate the transfer of relevant program data, tools, systems, and/or platforms developed under the previous award. The recipient must submit a transition plan within 20

- days of award that outlines the approach, timeline, and milestones for this knowledge transfer;
2. Coordinate and administer all components and aspects of the YALI Fellowship including institutes, Professional Development Experiences (PDEs), Reciprocal Exchange (RE) component, and follow-on alumni activities;
 3. Arrange and purchase all program travel in compliance with the Fly America Act, when possible, including: international roundtrip travel for all Fellows to/from their institute in the United States from/to their homes, domestic travel to PDE sites, RE component travel, and any other alumni/follow-on activity event travel;
 4. Develop content and alumni stories for public-facing YALI and/or ECA websites and social media accounts;
 5. Develop and implement an outreach plan and materials including brochures, one pagers and/or fact sheets, announcements, and other materials to communicate program information and demonstrate the significance of the YALI Fellowship;
 6. Create print and electronic materials, including PowerPoint presentations, for U.S. Department of State staff and others to use at U.S. embassies for pre-departure orientations and other occasions;
 7. Manage and coordinate support for program participants and all Fellowship components, including the provision of reasonable accommodations;
 8. Promptly inform ECA of any serious incidents or issues involving participants (both Fellows and Reciprocal Exchange participants) that may affect their participation in the program (including, but not limited to, medical emergencies and medical evacuations; natural disasters; arrests; or other serious legal issues or misconduct accusations). Consult with ECA on the response to any serious incidents and on crisis management decision-making and operations, including responding to media queries. Provide timely progress reports on any necessary follow-up action;
 9. Develop mandatory pre-departure online modules for all Fellows to complete prior to their participation in the institutes;
 10. Submit all print and online materials provided to or created for dissemination to applicants, participants, program partners, and U.S. government agencies, including U.S. embassies and consulates, and other entities to ECA for review before distribution;
 11. Consult with ECA on a plan for notifying members of Congress of the participation of Fellows and RE participants in and from their districts/states

- and send notification letters;
12. Clear communications with U.S. government agencies or entities involving the YALI Fellowship with ECA;
 13. Conduct performance monitoring that links outcomes of the program to stated program goals and objectives to ensure that all institutes meet comparable high levels of quality in fulfilling program goals. The recipient should complete this through post-program surveys, among other instruments as needed or requested;
 14. Develop and propose cost-effective and innovative ideas for alumni follow-on activities and creative and effective ways to engage participants after their exchange;
 15. Manage all ECA funds for the Fellowship components, including submitting required reports to ECA by the established deadlines;
 16. Coordinate an annual planning and debrief meeting with key personnel staff working on the Fellowship from both the recipient organization and ECA;
 17. Provide a detailed staffing plan that includes the names, titles, and portfolio assignments of all staff who will work on the YALI Fellowship. The recipient must submit any changes to program staffing structures and/or key personnel (to include program officers and higher) to ECA for approval;
 18. Prepare and print certificates for Fellows who successfully complete the program;
 19. Assume overall responsibility for complying with all applicable tax treaties and federal, state, and local laws on tax withholding and reporting for participants; and
 20. Develop health and safety protocols to protect the welfare of all participants; protocols should include plans to address participant safety in relation to any potential global, national, or local health crisis or emergency.

Collection and Maintenance of Program and Participant Data

1. Maintain and regularly update a database of participants and ensure the protection of personally identifiable information (PII). The recipient will consult with ECA and the FY 2024 award recipient to assemble and maintain the database;
2. Maintain accurate and up-to-date records on all Congressional interactions related to the YALI Fellowship;
3. Submit written weekly updates to ECA during the institutes and PDEs, as well as required annual and final program reports by the established

- deadlines and other ad hoc reporting as appropriate;
4. Enroll all participants in the ECA-sponsored Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE), for the duration of the program and issue an ASPE identification card for each participant; and
 5. Create and issue DS-2019 forms for the Fellows' J-1 visas.

Recruitment and Selection

1. Develop and implement recruitment and selection procedures in close coordination with ECA to administer a competitive application process for Fellows and work closely with ECA to develop merit-based selection criteria;
2. Develop and implement a recruitment plan and corresponding promotional materials, including, but not limited to, print materials (flyers, fact sheets, one pagers, brochures); prerecorded content (radio advertisements, podcasts, videos, etc.); and online content (website information, social media campaigns) for dissemination to U.S. embassies and consulates to support and enhance their recruitment of Fellows;
3. Manage the selection processes for Fellows, institute partners (sub-awardees), PDEs, RE participants, and other alumni opportunities in coordination with ECA;
4. Develop and maintain an online application and applicant database system;
5. In close consultation with ECA, develop and coordinate informational materials and training opportunities targeted for employees of U.S. embassies and consulates involved in the recruitment and selection process; and
6. Provide regular updates to ECA on recruitment and selection outcomes throughout the application and selection periods.

Design, Management, and Monitoring of Institutes

1. Design, implement, and oversee approximately 22 six-week institutes at accredited U.S. colleges and universities throughout the United States. Each institute will accommodate approximately 25 Fellows;
2. Identify and propose qualified U.S. educational institutions to conduct institutes through an invitational competition, and issue guidance on the development of program content and other activities to ensure consistency and quality across all institutes;
3. Provide and monitor subawards to the selected partners to conduct the institutes;

4. Organize and implement a virtual or in-person meeting after selection of subaward partners, and periodic virtual webinars prior to the start of the institutes for subaward partners;
5. Manage Fellow placement at institutes in cohorts by track;
6. Support and monitor the institutes through regular communication with the subaward partners and through site visits;
7. Develop a robust unifying curriculum to implement across all institutes during the academic program focused around a specific methodology, practical skill, or other theme that can be standardized and incorporated into each institute's curriculum. The standardized curriculum may include an assessment tool or inventory for Fellows to support active learning;
8. Coordinate, in conjunction with subaward partners, logistical and administrative arrangements for Fellows such as pre-departure information, U.S. airport pick-up and drop-off, institute arrival orientation, lodging and meals, domestic travel and airline baggage allowances, and the disbursement of program funds including travel allowances, in consultation with ECA; and
9. Coordinate, in conjunction with subaward partners, logistics related to necessary medical treatment, emergencies, or management of any special circumstances including reasonable accommodations.

Design, Management, and Monitoring of Professional Development Experiences (PDEs)

1. Design and oversee four to five-week follow-on PDEs for approximately 50 Fellows selected in advance from among the approximately 550 YALI Fellows;
2. Manage Fellow placement at PDE sites;
3. Coordinate logistical and administrative arrangements for PDE Fellows such as orientation, lodging, domestic travel to placement sites, and the disbursement of program funds including meal allowances, in consultation with ECA; and
4. Coordinate logistics related to necessary medical treatment, emergencies, or management of any special circumstances including reasonable accommodations.

Design, Management, and Monitoring of the Reciprocal Exchange Component

1. Coordinate and support a Reciprocal Exchange component for approximately 80 U.S. professionals to travel to Sub-Saharan Africa, allowing

- for limited virtual participation where in-person implementation is not possible due to security risks or other considerations as approved by ECA;
2. Develop a merit-based recruitment and selection process to identify project proposals that address strategic issues, foster lasting partnerships, contribute to market or network expansion, and increase ties between the United States and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa; and
 3. Prepare and distribute certificates of completion (or an equivalent) for American participants who successfully complete their projects.

II. PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

A. Program Overview

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State invites proposal submissions for the design and implementation of the YALI Fellowship for approximately 550 accomplished young innovators and professionals from Sub-Saharan Africa.

The main components of the FY 2026 Fellowship will take place in summer 2027 to include rigorous six-week academic institutes conducted by approximately 22 U.S. institutions of higher education on their campuses, follow-on PDEs for approximately 50 Fellows, a Reciprocal Exchange component for approximately 80 U.S. professionals, and follow-on alumni activities. ECA encourages proposals that incorporate multi-day off-campus field experiences for Fellows to connect with organizations and individuals connected to institute tracks in locations distinct from their institute campus and/or to convene with Fellows from other institutes.

Please refer to the NOFO for Fellowship overview. Proposals should describe in detail the capacity of the applicant to fulfill all requirements of the NOFO and POGI. Proposals should include a detailed recruitment and selection plan and offer specific strategies for placement of Fellows at appropriate institutes and at appropriate organizations for PDEs. Proposals should provide a list of approximately 25 qualified colleges, universities, and/or non-profit organizations the applicant, if selected, would invite to submit proposals for subawards to operate institutes. Proposals should also address the applicant's regional, exchange, or other expertise that would contribute to successful administration of the program. The proposal should explain logistics and reasonable

accommodations in detail for each Fellowship component.

It is essential that proposals provide a full, detailed, and comprehensive narrative describing how the award recipient will achieve the objectives of the YALI Fellowship for all components. The U.S. Department of State will review the proposal based on its completeness, coherence, clarity, and attention to detail, and against each of the criteria stipulated in the NOFO.

B. Program Dates

Main activities for the base year of the FY 2026 YALI Fellowship cooperative agreement will take place in summer 2027. Each institute should be six weeks in length (approximately 40-45 days, inclusive of travel for field experiences or convening events, if proposed). All institutes should begin and end on the same dates. PDEs must be at least four weeks in duration and start immediately following the institutes. ECA anticipates that Reciprocal Exchanges may occur at any time during the award's period of performance and within each individual project's pre-determined period of performance.

C. Program Administration

Proposals must include a staffing plan that details how staff will fulfill responsibilities. Applicants should consider cost-effective strategies to successfully implement all proposed activities and initiatives while ensuring that staffing levels and structure are adequate for managing participant health and safety. The full staffing plan and titles may vary; however, proposals must include a project director and distinct and separate positions that will oversee the institutes, PDEs, Reciprocal Exchange component, and follow-on alumni activities; these components should have at least one designated full-time position.

The award recipient must designate a qualified project director to oversee all aspects of this program. The proposed project director must demonstrate relevant past experience that would contribute to their role of coordinating logistical and administrative arrangements; working with ECA to ensure a fair and transparent recruitment and selection process; ensuring an appropriate level of consistency among the different subaward partners; overseeing Reciprocal Exchanges and all alumni programming; and overseeing the communications plan including the

website, among other duties. The project director will serve as ECA's primary point of contact.

Upon selecting subaward partners, the award recipient must confirm a qualified academic director employed by each subaward partner institution who will be in-person for the entire institute to ensure the continuity, coherence, and integration of all aspects of the six-week program. Each proposed academic director must demonstrate relevant experience for their role in planning and implementing the program, overseeing day-to-day management, monitoring Fellows, and reporting to the award recipient. In addition, the award recipient should confirm a qualified administrative director or coordinator employed by each subaward partner institution with demonstrated experience for their role in overseeing all Fellow support services, including supervision of program participants and budgetary, logistical, participant health and safety, and other administrative arrangements. Subaward partners should designate additional staff as appropriate. All staff who work directly with Fellows must work in person (not remotely) for the duration of the program except in cases when changing health, environmental, or other similar circumstances require a suspension or halt of in-person activities.

The award recipient should have the capacity to maintain an alumni database to electronically manage applicant and participant data for all Fellowship and Reciprocal Exchange alumni since 2014. The award recipient must protect and secure all applicant and participant Personally Identifiable Information (PII). All statistical information that the recipient gathers and compiles on the participants should be electronically transferable to ECA in a safe and secure manner. Therefore, proposals must confirm that the intended system for collecting and storing data on participants protects PII and is compatible with ECA's systems.

D. YALI Fellows

Each institute will accommodate approximately 25 YALI Fellows. The U.S. Department of State will determine a final list of eligible countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Fellows will be highly motivated and accomplished young African innovators and professionals who have demonstrated achievement through academic work, community involvement, career advancement, and extracurricular activities. They

will be between the ages of 25 and 35 at the time of application and have a demonstrated interest in at least one of the Fellowship tracks, in learning more about the United States, and in developing skills and a professional network in their field. Recruitment plans should include efforts to reach qualified applicants who are from rural and urban areas and who have had little or no prior experience in the United States. All Fellows should have strong English language skills.

The YALI Fellowship is committed to ensuring that all participants are selected through a merit-based process and can participate fully in the Fellowship. When necessary, the award recipient will be responsible for working with subaward partners to provide reasonable accommodations and support to facilitate a full and engaging experience for all Fellows during the institutes.

E. Recruitment and Outreach

In addition to planning for the recruitment of qualified applicants to the Fellowship, proposals should include a comprehensive outreach plan to communicate program information and demonstrate the significance of the Fellowship to relevant audiences. A detailed plan for recruitment and outreach should include:

- Recruitment materials for dissemination to U.S. embassies and consulates to support and enhance their recruitment of Fellows, including, but not limited to, print and online content, social media content, radio advertisements, and videos;
- Communications guidance materials for exchange participants and partners of the YALI Fellowship;
- General outreach materials including, but not limited to, brochures, one pagers and/or fact sheets, announcements, and significant experience or outcome stories. Outreach materials should include print and virtual content;
- Community outreach materials to educate U.S. citizens on the YALI Fellowship, particularly those who will interact with Fellows during the institutes and PDEs;
- A strategy for creating content to regularly disseminate information about open applications (when applicable), program significance, alumni achievements, and other YALI components (when applicable);
- A roadmap for collecting, analyzing, reporting, maintaining, and presenting

impact data from YALI Fellowship partners and alumni, with special emphasis on data visualization;

- Providing analytic information and reports about all digital media assets;
- Development of Congressional notification letters and accompanying promotional inserts for U.S. Members of Congress, highlighting the U.S. institutions, organizations, and individuals in their respective state or district who are participating in Fellowship activities, as well as Reciprocal Exchange participants;
- Appropriate staffing levels and structure to effectively implement all proposed activities and initiatives; and
- Details on how all activities and materials will comply with all current and future guidance and regulations from ECA's Office of Public Affairs and Strategic Communications.

The award recipient will also be responsible for maintaining the YALI Fellowship website and all its components in a dynamic and interactive manner, including the private Fellowship Portal. At a minimum, the website should:

- Be updated regularly and include relevant YALI Fellowship information including overview, mission, and goals of the Fellowship;
- Maintain alignment with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web standards and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act;
- Highlight accomplishments, experiences, and influence of current and past program participants and partners;
- Provide information about current application and partnership opportunities;
- Include a link to the online application platform for Fellowship applicants (as referenced in section F. Fellow Application Screening and Selection Process, below).
- Maintain a page about any alumni and follow-on activities available to eligible Fellowship and Reciprocal Exchange alumni;
- Maintain and update a database of all past and current Fellows;
- Maintain a directory of all past and current program partners; and
- Provide a secure Fellowship Portal to contain additional information about the Fellowship. The Fellowship Portal should be open to Fellowship and Reciprocal Exchange alumni and selected Fellowship finalists (and alternates, as necessary).

Recipients should submit all print and online materials to ECA for review and approval before distribution. Prior to ECA review, the award recipient should carefully draft, edit, and revise all materials to meet standards commensurate with the prestige and character of the YALI Fellowship.

The award recipient should clear any official communication with U.S. government agencies or entities, including U.S. Members of Congress, involving the YALI Fellowship with ECA before dissemination.

F. Fellow Application Screening and Selection Process

The award recipient must have a comprehensive and detailed selection plan that includes specific strategies for placement of all Fellows at appropriate institutes. The recipient should design an online application form (see section E. Recruitment and Outreach). At minimum, the YALI Fellowship application form should collect essay responses, a rank order list of each applicant's preferred institute track, and demographic information. The application form should include an essay prompt requiring each applicant to explain how they will use the experience upon their return home. The Fellowship application form should include an opportunity for applicants to apply for PDEs (see section H. Professional Development Experiences for more information). The online application platform should be integrated with an online platform for participant selection (see below) and may allow for an open or invitational application process.

Each eligible applicant must:

- Be a citizen of and reside in an eligible sub-Saharan African country. Persons holding U.S. citizenship or permanent residency are ineligible;
- Speak, read, and write proficiently in English;
- Be aged 25-35 at the time of application submission;
- Have a proven record of accomplishment in business, trade, emerging technology, governance, and/or security;
- Demonstrate clear interest in building and maintaining partnerships with American organizations and businesses that advance shared goals; and
- Illustrate commitment to return to Sub-Saharan Africa and contribute skills and talents to build and serve their communities.

ECA welcomes innovative proposals for a merit-based selection process. The award recipient should conduct a technical review of all submitted applications to narrow the pool of viable applications for further review stages as part of a multi-stage process. The technical review should include checks for eligibility, authenticity, and completeness, including a plan for identifying and managing plagiarized application essays. Proposals should also explore the potential use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to assist with the technical review process and subsequent review stages as appropriate and reasonable. The recipient should outline its strategy to staff and/or recruit reviewers and use a transparent, merit-based review process, with clearly identified criteria for assessing and assigning scores to applications that align with U.S. foreign policy priorities. The award recipient may recruit American professionals engaged in fields relevant to the program such as African or other international affairs, business, trade, emerging technologies, governance, security, global health, and education to assist with reading and evaluating applications. U.S. embassies and consulates must receive access to the online applications for conducting interviews, adding final comments, and ranking finalist candidates based on mission priorities. U.S. embassies and consulates should receive assigned application scores no later than late November each year. ECA will provide final approval of selected Fellows. ECA encourages applicants to submit an outline of this process and a draft application form in the proposal appendices.

The recipient should use an online platform to facilitate the selection process. The online selection platform should:

- Allow multiple configurations of user accounts for various stakeholders to view applications and enter scores, as relevant, including but not limited to independent evaluators, support staff at U.S. missions abroad, and ECA staff;
- Allow users at U.S. missions abroad to sort, filter, and bulk download applications based on relevant applicant demographic categories and reader scores; and
- Provide a dashboard view and/or downloadable reports for select users to view application statistics including application numbers by citizenship and resident country and basic demographic information.

The award recipient will collaborate closely with the U.S. Department of State to develop online training webinars and videos for employees of U.S. missions abroad who will support outreach, recruitment, and selection. The training materials and activities should include appropriate content for both new and experienced

Fellowship stakeholders at U.S. embassies and consulates. Training content should include a thorough overview of relevant policies and procedures, opportunities to share best practices, and training activities for relevant online systems and platforms.

G. Institutes

Please refer to Overview of the Institutes in NOFO section C.3. Program Specific Guidelines. Proposals should include a list of approximately 25 qualified U.S. colleges, universities, and/or non-profit organizations that the applicant, if selected, would invite to apply for subawards to facilitate institutes on a college or university campus in the United States. Proposed institutions should represent the breadth of excellence in U.S. higher education and have capacity to carry out institutes as described below. Proposals should also address the applicant's regional, exchange, or other expertise in working with higher education institutions that would contribute to successful administration of the program.

The Institutes should:

- Cover all logistics including providing Fellows with administrative and academic orientations to the United States and each institute campus. Administrative orientation content should fully brief Fellows on the operational details of the program, including campus and local resources. Academic orientation content should provide Fellows with a concise overview of the institute, including principal objectives and major track themes and focus areas. Fellows should have routine access to program staff for program-related inquiries;
- Consist of a carefully integrated series of practical academic content that considers lesson plans, appropriate guest speakers, engaging discussions, individual and group classroom activities, and reading assignments. Sessions should be interactive and allow ample time for the free exchange of ideas among Fellows and presenters;
- Incorporate site visits that are complementary to classroom content. Locations may include government offices (meetings with executive representatives, legislators, and judicial representatives), think tanks, non-governmental organizations, historical sites, schools, businesses, museums, etc. Any engagement with federal government agencies or officials must

- receive prior approval from ECA;
- Include cultural exchange activities that expose Fellows to American history and traditions such as Fourth of July celebrations, sports games, and community events. ECA encourages organized optional cultural and weekend activities that take place in person or virtually to give Fellows the opportunity to experience the rich culture of the United States while fostering group cohesion;
- Allow for free time to pursue individual interests, unstructured networking and socializing with other Fellows and American peers, exercising, and rest. The program schedule should also include adequate time for reading and preparation of academic assignments;
- Incorporate structured and unstructured interaction between Fellows and Americans, including opportunities to network and exchange ideas; and
- Provide all transportation, housing, and meal arrangements for the Fellows.

Institutes may also optionally include hands-on community service activities during the six-week program with a local nonprofit or community organization. Any community service component should be related to the institute track or themes and include an introduction to volunteerism in the United States.

ECA encourages proposals for institutes that incorporate multi-day off-campus field experiences or events for Fellows to connect with organizations and individuals connected to institute tracks in locations distinct from their institute campus and/or to convene with Fellows from other institutes. Convening field experiences or events could bring Fellows together based on institute tracks, themes, or geographic regions.

H. Professional Development Experiences (PDEs)

Please refer to Overview of the Professional Development Experience (PDE) in NOFO section C.3. Program Specific Guidelines. Proposals should include a detailed and specific recruitment and selection plan and offer specific strategies for placement of Fellows at appropriate PDE hosts.

The PDEs should:

- Be at least four weeks long; PDE Fellows should also have the option to

- complete an extended virtual experience or project with the U.S. host;
- Take place immediately following the institutes;
- Take place at a relevant NGO, business, or governmental agency in the United States;
- Be substantive and appropriate and tie into the Fellow's institute track, theme, and/or professional interest to ensure a substantive experience for both the placement organization and the Fellow;
- Be planned and implemented for approximately 50 of the Fellows; only one, or in exceptional cases two Fellows may be placed in one organization. In very limited cases, three Fellows may be placed in distinct offices or work units of one large organization;
- Encourage opportunities for PDE Fellows and organizations in the same U.S. region to network during the PDEs;
- Include all housing, meal arrangements, and required transportation; and
- Include at least one on-site U.S. mentor/supervisor within the PDE organization who will oversee and monitor the PDE Fellow.

I. Reciprocal Exchange Component

The Reciprocal Exchange (RE) component should:

- Provide small grants for approximately 80 U.S. professionals to travel to sub-Saharan African countries for up to 30 days to collaborate with Fellowship alumni on projects that address strategic issues of shared interest. Fellowship alumni from any cohort since the Fellowship's inception in 2014 should be considered eligible collaborators for RE participants. Individual projects may include up to four U.S. participants. Hybrid collaborations may be permissible in lieu of U.S. participant travel to Sub-Saharan Africa with appropriate justification and approval from ECA; and
- Provide opportunities for Americans and Fellowship alumni to foster lasting partnerships, expand markets and networks, and increase ties between the United States and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. These opportunities could include virtual engagement pre- or post-travel to enhance the effects of the in-person exchange.

Proposals should include a detailed and specific outreach and selection plan for the Reciprocal Exchange component. The recipient must develop a competitive and

merit-based application process that adheres to the following criteria:

- Projects must include at least one U.S. professional and one alumnus or alumna of the YALI Fellowship (previously the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders).
- U.S. professionals must be U.S. citizens currently living in the United States and must not have previously received more than two YALI Fellowship and/or Mandela Washington Fellowship Reciprocal Exchange award(s).
- All Fellowship alumni who partner with U.S. participants must be living in Sub-Saharan Africa, must be considered alumni of the Fellowship by the U.S. Department of State, and must not have previously received more than two Reciprocal Exchange award(s).
- Successful applications to the Reciprocal Exchange component should:
 - Clearly outline a project that meets program goals and objectives;
 - Describe the anticipated effect(s) on the U.S. professional's home organization and community;
 - Describe the anticipated effect(s) on the Fellow's home institution, community, and/or country;
 - Demonstrate joint engagement between the Fellow and U.S. professional in project design and implementation;
 - Articulate the need for the U.S. professional to travel to implement the project, or a justification for hybrid implementation; and
 - Detail specific project activities and provide measurable project goals.

The award recipient should conduct a technical review of all applications received for eligibility and completeness. The award recipient should use a transparent, merit-based review process, with clearly identified criteria for assessing the applications. U.S. embassies in-country must approve final project locations and dates. Applicants should demonstrate capacity to support up to 100 U.S. citizens to travel for Reciprocal Exchange projects should additional funding become available. ECA will provide final approval of participants and projects.

Each Reciprocal Exchange project should receive up to \$6,000 per American participant, and no project should receive more than \$24,000 total in funding, regardless of the number of American participants. Funding for virtual or hybrid projects (i.e. those not requiring international travel) should be limited to no more than \$3,000 per project.

J. Logistical Considerations

- **Participant health and safety** is an ECA priority. The recipient should consider the health, safety, and welfare of participants at all times. This includes assisting participants to understand the ECA-sponsored Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) plan. ECA expects the recipient and subaward partners to assist in health- and safety-related emergencies. The recipient and subaward partners should also help Fellows understand and navigate the American healthcare system and national, state, local, and campus policies.
- Proposals must discuss **housing and meal arrangements** in detail. In general, Fellows should be housed in university housing or at an extended stay hotel within close proximity to classroom sites, ideally within walking distance, for the duration of the six-week institutes. The proposal should indicate options for housing and meals that account for dietary, religious, medical, or other living requirements. If possible, Fellows should have access to kitchen facilities, either in their own rooms or in a common area. A cafeteria meal plan combined with a cash allowance for food that will permit participants to cook or eat at local restaurants is strongly recommended. Appropriate housing and meals must also be arranged and provided for the duration of PDEs. To the extent permitted by budget limitations, Fellows may receive up to the U.S. government per diem rate for meals and incidental expenses at the various program locales. See <http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem> for current U.S. government per diem rates.
- The recipient should plan to process **participant forms** including, but not limited to, medical forms, program terms and conditions, and media release forms. The recipient is responsible for distributing and collecting signed forms from participants. The recipient should notify ECA of any potential concerns or issues. The recipient is responsible for safeguarding forms containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
- The recipient will develop and deliver virtual **Pre-Departure Orientations** (PDOs) to prepare all participants for the Fellowship. Topics may include, but are not limited to, program terms and conditions, setting expectations, U.S. cultural norms, cultural adjustment, health and safety guidelines and practices, and logistics. If conditions allow, U.S. embassies and consulates will also provide at least one day of in-person content, in conjunction with

participant visa interviews, prior to Fellows' arrival in the United States. The recipient will be responsible for developing all orientation materials, including for the in-person sessions at U.S. embassies and consulates. Pre-departure materials should be available to Fellows and U.S. embassies and consulates online or emailed in ample time before the institutes start date and no later than six weeks before the start of the program.

- The recipient is responsible for disbursing at least \$200 and up to \$400 as a **travel allowance** to each Fellow to support them during their travel to and from the United States. ECA anticipates that most Fellows will receive the \$200 travel stipend, with higher stipends available to participants who must travel independently to reach an international airport.
- The recipient should conduct **performance monitoring and evaluation** on a regular basis to promptly identify and resolve any academic, administrative, and personnel problems during the institutes, and to measure program performance as outlined in NOFO section C.5. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). The award recipient will deliver and administer pre-program (baseline) and post-program surveys. At the conclusion of the institutes, recipients should ensure that Fellows have time reserved to complete the post-program survey. Additionally, the recipient may be responsible for conducting alumni surveys as determined in consultation with ECA. Please note, ECA intends to administer alumni surveys at regular intervals to collect impact information from all ECA alumni. ECA will host, administer, and analyze these alumni surveys on ECA's survey platform. The award recipient will be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to minimize duplicative questions and survey fatigue.

Please note: All Fellows are required to return to their home countries following the conclusion of the program (either after the institutes or PDEs). Fellows should be permitted to travel within the United States during their institutes and PDEs as long as they attend all required activities and receive the necessary approval to travel. Family or friends may be permitted to visit the Fellows while the latter are in residence at the institute or PDE placement at the discretion of the award recipient and in consultation with ECA, provided that such visits will not prove disruptive to the program. At no time will family or friends be permitted to accompany the Fellows during scheduled program activities, whether such activities are mandatory or optional.

K. Alumni/Follow-on Activities

Proposals should outline clearly developed follow-on activities but should also remain flexible enough to allow for changes based on program priorities and availability of funding. The recipient should finance alumni activities using the line item budgeted for follow-on activities. ECA encourages applicants to provide cost share towards alumni engagement activities.

Proposals should include minimally the following alumni opportunities:

- An application-based impact award recognizing a member of the Fellowship alumni network who demonstrates the benefits in partnering with the U.S. and promotes the significance of the Fellowship (currently the Leadership Impact Award);
- A digital engagement plan to provide alumni with access to online resources, databases, and opportunities to further their professional development;
- An opportunity allowing alumni to travel and engage with experts at events on themes relevant to their business, organization, or profession;
- An application- and merit-based grant supporting follow-on work of American Reciprocal Exchange alumni in the United States; and
- Funds reserved for on-demand alumni programming that respond to topics of strategic importance, to be used at ECA's discretion.

The U.S. Department of State will facilitate continued engagement by Fellows in alumni activities. The Fellows should return home with new ideas, expanded contacts, and action plans for future months. ECA's Office of Alumni Affairs will work with the Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs and other government agencies to facilitate follow-on communication and activities with participants and with U.S. missions abroad.

III. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

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

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

guidelines as clearly as possible.

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

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

IV. OTHER AWARD INFORMATION

Adherence To All Regulations Governing The J Visa

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

V. APPLICATION SUBMISSION

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