# Educational and Cultural Affairs
## U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

**U.S. Department of State**
**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)**
**Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**
**FY 2026 English Language Fellow, Specialist,**
**and Virtual Educator Program**
**Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017779**
**Application Deadline: Friday, April 24, 2026**

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## A. Basic Information

## 1. Overview.

| Funding Opportunity Title | FY 2026 English Language Fellow, Specialist, and Virtual Educator Program |
|---|---|
| Funding Opportunity Number | DFOP0017779 |
| Announcement Type | New Cooperative Agreement |
| Deadline for Applications | April 24, 2026 11:59pm Eastern (Washington DC time) |
| Assistance Listing Number | 19.421 |

| Length of Performance Period | 55 months |
|---|---|
| Number of Awards Anticipated | 1 award |
| Award Amount | approximately $14,000,000 |
| Total Available Funding | $14,000,000 pending availability of funds |
| Type of Funding | FY26 Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs (ECE) Funds |
| Funding Instrument Type | Cooperative Agreement |
| Anticipated Award Date | July 17, 2026 |

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

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

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

## 2. Executive Summary.

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Office of English Language Programs (ECA/A/L) announces an open competition to support the FY 2026 English Language Fellow, Specialist, and Virtual Educator Program (ELFSVEP). ECA/A/L plans to issue one cooperative agreement to support approximately 385 participants for $14,000,000, pending the availability of funds.

The English Language (EL) Fellow, Specialist, and Virtual Educator Program (ELFSVEP) places top-tier American experts in the field of English teaching in strategic projects at key institutions to advance U.S. interests in strategic countries. The program sends highly qualified experts on approximately ten-month Fellow exchanges, short-term (two weeks or more) Specialist assignments, or three-week to six-month Virtual Educator assignments at educational institutions in all world regions.

English Language programs advance American influence with critical audiences and have a cascading reach and strategic returns.  The initiatives go beyond teaching English; they advance America's national interest by embedding the global language of diplomacy, business, and science abroad.  American expertise is in high demand by foreign governments, educational institutions, and workplaces.  Providing American English Educators abroad allows U.S. Missions to build trusted networks in fragile regions, reinforce alliances through shared language and values, and promote U.S. economic interests.  When America leads in English Language teaching, we set the terms of engagement; when America steps back, competitors fill the void.  These programs ensure foreign partners turn first to the United States for English education, vocational upskilling, and secure partnerships, delivering on the Department's America First mission.

## B. Eligibility

### 1. 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.

### 2. Cost Sharing.
There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this program.

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

b. ECA's Grant Guidelines require that organizations demonstrate at least four years of experience in conducting international exchanges to be eligible for awards exceeding $130,000 in ECA funding.  As noted in *Section A. Basic Information*, ECA anticipates issuing one award, for approximately $14,000,000.  Therefore, organizations must demonstrate four years of experience in conducting international exchanges in your proposal to be eligible to apply under this competition.

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

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

e.  Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization.  In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

    **Please note**:  Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the PSI document.

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

## C. Program Description

### 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 English Language (EL) Fellow, Specialist, and Virtual Educator award builds English language capacity in direct support of U.S. policy priorities and contributes to stable, educated, and economically empowered societies, which support U.S. trade, national security, and global leadership.  Through this award, U.S. educator participants provide foreign educators, professionals, and students with the communication skills they need to participate in the global economy, while ensuring the United States continues to be recognized as an international leader in English teaching, education, educational training and technology, vocational education and upskilling.

## 3.  Program Specific Guidelines.

By deploying highly skilled American English educators to key regions worldwide, the EL Fellow, Specialist, and Virtual Educator Program advances U.S. strategic interests by enhancing global English language capacity, fostering economic and educational opportunities, and reinforcing America's leadership in innovation, trade, and diplomacy.

ELFSVEP comprises three related ECA professional exchange programs:
- English Language Fellows – U.S. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) professionals completing approximately 10-month in-person teaching, training, or curriculum development assignments at host institutions overseas.
    o Participant Numbers: approximately 100 - 120
    o Budget: traditionally, costs for this component are 55-65% of the award amount
    o Projects will begin during the 2027-2028 Academic Year of the receiving countries.

- English Language Specialists – U.S. TESOL experts conducting on-demand, short-term in-person, virtual or hybrid technical projects.
    o Participant Numbers: approximately 150 - 190
    o Budget: traditionally, costs for this component are 25-30% of the award amount
    o On-demand projects will take place during Calendar Years 2027 and 2028.
        o Implementation of on demand programming may begin in 2026 if applicant pool is available.

- Virtual English Language Educators – U.S. TESOL practitioners delivering on-demand virtual English teaching or teacher-training support.

- o Participant Numbers: approximately 80 - 120
- o Budget: traditionally, costs for this component are 5-10% of the award amount
- o On-demand projects will begin during Academic Years 2027-2028 of the receiving countries.
  - o Implementation of on demand programming may begin in 2026 if applicant pool is available.

## 4. Recipient Responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

**a.** Overall Program Management:

- Collaborate with the bureau in strategic planning and program direction.
- Recruit, vet, and select a pool of highly qualified U.S. TESOL professionals and subject matter experts.
- Ensure participant readiness through training, orientation, and pre-assignment preparation.
- Support safe, successful, and accountable program implementation.
- Maintain high-quality communication with ECA, U.S. embassies, and overseas receiving institutions.
- Provide strong financial management and reporting.
- Deliver meaningful alumni engagement aligned with program goals (No more than 3% of the budget).
- Collect, analyze, and report data that measure performance, quality, and outcomes.
- Ensure all activities comply with U.S. government regulations and ECA guidelines.
- Support U.S. administration and foreign policy goals by strengthening host-country capacity in English language instruction, vocational upskilling, and economic opportunity.

Applicants are encouraged to propose new approaches and modern systems, including technologies that increase efficiency and improve participant, alumni, and host-institution engagement.

**b.** Program-specific Responsibilities:

English Language Fellow Program:  Manage a 10-month, in-person program with responsibilities such as the following:

- Coordinating with U.S. embassies on receiving institution requests

- Analyzing proposals and facilitating project matching with overseas receiving institutions and U.S. embassies
- Recruitment, selection, and placement of Fellows
- Delivering pre-departure training, coordinating travel, and providing allowances
- Providing participant support throughout award duration
- Monitoring participant performance and safety
- Ensuring program documentation, reporting, and financial compliance

English Language Specialist Program:  Manage short-term in-person, virtual, and hybrid technical projects, with responsibilities such as the following:
- Vetting and maintaining a pool of highly qualified U.S. English language education experts
- Analyzing proposals and facilitating project matching with overseas receiving institutions and U.S. embassies
- Supporting pre-project preparation and training
- Monitoring deliverables and completion
- Processing payments and reporting
- Ensuring quality of virtual, hybrid, or in-person engagements

Virtual English Language Educator Program:  Manage fully virtual English teaching projects, with responsibilities such as the following:
- Vetting and maintaining a pool of English language teaching experts
- Analyzing proposals and facilitating project matching with overseas institutions and U.S. embassies
- Supporting pre-project preparation and training
- Monitoring deliverables and completion
- Processing payments and reporting
- Ensuring quality of virtual, hybrid, or in-person engagements

Timeline:
- Provide a timeline for the EL Fellow, Specialist, and Virtual Educator Programs, specifying anticipated dates for program activities.  The timeline should indicate specifics based on the following expectations for this 55-month award:
  - Years 1-2: Recruitment, applicant screening, selection panel support, onboarding, pre-departure preparation; begin participant placement of on demand programming if applicant pool is available

- o Years 2–4: Participant placement, program implementation, project monitoring, financial management, and participant support.
- o Years 4–5: Alumni engagement, long-term follow-up, dissemination of results, data reporting, and continuation of multi-year Fellows and Specialists as applicable.

Please note that some overlap in activities during program years will occur due to the nature of on-demand programming of the English Language Specialist and Virtual Educator programs.

**c.** Outreach, Recruitment, and Communications Responsibilities:
- Develop and implement marketing and recruitment strategies to attract a broad pool of applicants.
- Design and maintain clear, efficient, and user-friendly application processes to streamline applicant experience.
- Conduct targeted outreach to TESOL professionals across the United States to increase program awareness and participation.
- Establish and maintain effective communications with U.S. embassies, alumni, academic institutions, and professional organizations to support recruitment and program goals.
- Carrying out virtual events for current participants, prospective participants, and alumni as directed by ECA.
- Piloting online professional development opportunities with alumni, when appropriate.

Proposals should include innovative communication approaches, including—but not limited to—digital outreach, social media, and professional networks.

d. English Language Education Conference Related Activities:
- In collaboration with ECA, selecting premier English language and educational technology conferences to attend and to support the Outreach and Recruitment plan.
- Organizing and implementing the participation of ECA and Regional English Language Offices (RELO) in premier English language education and educational technology conferences, which would include but not be limited to organizing booth design, presentations, travel and accommodations for staff, etc.

e. Alumni Engagement:

The recipient will be responsible for alumni engagement that supports:
- Ongoing communication.
- Networking.
- Continued professional development.
- Data collection related to alumni outcomes.
- Opportunities for impact amplification where appropriate.

Approaches should be flexible, scalable, and cost-effective.  Alumni engagement funds should not exceed 3% of the proposed budget.

f. Outcomes Assessment:
- In collaboration with ECA, conducting analysis of program trends, creating comprehensive reports on program impact, and making recommendations for program improvements.
- The ELFSVEP is by nature a high-impact program.  Longitudinal data is essential to Monitoring and Evaluation.  The recipient will be responsible for following and implementing the MODE Framework as determined by the Department (See indicators in Section 5).

g. Information Management:
- Maintaining information-sharing tools (e.g., website, program database, contact management system, video conferencing/webinars, social media, online Community of Practice), for the management of the EL Fellow, Specialist, and Virtual Educator Programs as well as for outreach.  Abiding by the ECA guidance found at [ECA's Communications Guidance](#).  The information-sharing tools must be easy to access and secure, and updates must be made in a timely manner.  Data must be maintained in a way that will enable the recipient organization to provide ECA with information on the EL Fellows, Specialists, and Virtual Educators quickly upon request.

h. Content and Design for Print and Digital Materials:
- Motivating EL Fellows, Specialists, and Virtual Educators to submit content to be used on the online Community of Practice as well as for print and digital publication, including for the *English Teaching Forum* journal and the American English website.
- Curating content and subscribing to necessary tools and resources for production of digital and print content.

## 5.  Goals and Objectives.

Program Objectives and Alignment with U.S. Strategic Priorities:

- By embedding U.S. educational methodologies and professional standards into institutions around the world, the program fosters increased trade and enhances U.S. competitiveness in business, science and technology, artificial intelligence, and innovation-driven industries.
- By equipping global professionals with industry-specific English skills, the program reduces economic factors that contribute to illegal migration. Strengthening local education and local workforce engagement creates employment pathways within home countries, mitigating the need for migration and safeguarding American security.
- American English proficiency serves as a gateway to accurate information, good governance, and economic self-sufficiency, reducing susceptibility to drivers of illegal migration and to extremist narratives, ideology, and influence.
- As a strategic public diplomacy tool, the program demonstrates and highlights U.S. achievements in education, technology, and business.  By embedding highly skilled American educators in strategic institutions worldwide, it elevates America's reputation for academic excellence and technological innovation, fostering positive perceptions of the United States and expanding American influence.

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

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

ECA created the Monitoring Data for ECA (MODE) Framework to measure the performance of ECA programs.  **The MODE Framework provides standard indicators and corresponding survey questions to ensure consistent measures across all ECA programs.**  More resources and guidance documents on the MODE Framework are available online at: https://www.state.gov/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/.

The proposal must include the MODE Framework objectives and indicators listed below (note that, because not all MODE objectives and indicators are relevant for a program, the numbering below will not be sequential).  In addition to the ECA-required objectives and indicators, applicants may also select additional MODE

Framework indicators (see the ***Indicator Book*** on the MODE Framework website), or design custom objectives and indicators that are specific to the proposed program and this proposal.

- Demographic Questions as outlined in the **Indicator Book** on page v and **Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)** (See the MODE Resource Guide – https://app.box.com/s/qjo8icwj46tc8h1i1qtg80zl7ibwgtua – found on our website https://www.state.gov/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/)

  **EL Fellow Program Objectives**
  - 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
      - E1.1.09:  Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of 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
  - Objective 3:  Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
    - 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
    - E4.0.01: Percent of participants reporting increases in their job skills as a result of their program participation
    - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation
    - E4.0.05:  Percent of participants who report an increase in technical 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)

- E4.1.04: Number of professional placements
- E4.1.07: Number of instruction methodology trainings implemented
- E4.1.08: Number of language teaching fellows enrolled
- E4.1.13: Number of fellows completing language teaching fellowships
- 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)

**EL Specialist Program Objectives**
- 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
    - E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of 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
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
  - 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
  - E4.0.01: Percent of participants reporting increases in their job skills as a result of their program participation
  - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation
  - E4.0.05: Percent of participants who report an increase in technical 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)
    - E4.1.04: Number of professional placements
    - E4.1.07: Number of instruction methodology trainings

implemented
- Objective 8:  Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau's resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships
    - E8.0.03:  Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

**Virtual EL Educator Program Objectives**
- 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
        - E1.1.16: Percent of virtual exchange (VE) participants who report VE as their only likely way to interact with citizens from other countries in the future
- Objective 3:  Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
    - 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
    - E4.0.01: Percent of participants reporting increases in their job skills as a result of their program participation
    - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation
    - E4.0.05:  Percent of participants who report an increase in technical 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)
        - E4.1.04: Number of professional placements
        - E4.1.07: Number of instruction methodology trainings implemented
- Objective 8: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau's resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships
    - E8.0.03: Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

## Performance Monitoring Plans (PMPs)

ECA recommends the use of a PMP to serve as the primary reference document for performance monitoring for this award.  If used, the PMP is an important part of any proposal, as it outlines how the applicant plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions.  A PMP document that includes all MODE Framework indicators is a part of this solicitation's attachments.  Specific instructions on how to modify the PMP to be responsive to this solicitation are included in that document; there is also a support video available for more information on how to fill out the PMP:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBHC1oLNZvI.  While ECA recommends the applicant use the PMP format provided, this is not a requirement.  If a PMP is not included in the proposal, applicants should provide similar information to that found in the suggested PMP format, in a presentation of your choice.  Successful PMPs (or similar documentation) should include the following:

- Objectives.  Programmatic objectives are statements of the condition(s) that state what the program is designed to achieve.  Objectives are therefore bound by the resources and timeframe of the program and must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).  In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the MODE Framework or other applicant-designed program-specific objectives.
- Indicators.  Performance indicators are measures used to gauge progress toward programmatic objectives and sub-objectives.  Indicators should be as specific as possible (following the SMART principles) and include any proposed disaggregations (meaning, breakdowns of the data by subgroups; the PMP lists the demographic questions required to obtain the information necessary to report the disaggregations).  Each indicator should also include a target number to be achieved.  A target is a planned level of result to be achieved within an explicit timeframe.
  - 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 and/or POGI. In this instance, the recipient will be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to de-duplicate questions and minimize potential survey fatigue.

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

## Program Performance M&E Narrative

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

- An overview of resources available to the applicant that outline the team structure and responsibilities surrounding performance monitoring.
- The mechanism(s) through which surveys and other data collection tools (if applicable) will be administered, including which platform will be used, and when and how surveys will be advertised to participants – detailing strategies to ensure adequate survey response rates (https://app.box.com/s/pn6tavyg7sh064i502fzap49ox63y38a), and to reduce selection and non-response bias.
- A brief explanation of data analysis and reporting procedures.
- An overview of a proposed learning plan and feedback loops to ensure that the Grant Officer (GO)/Grant Officer Representative (GOR) are informed on performance monitoring issues at regular intervals.

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

ECA has created a guided tool (the MODE Survey Builder) within the Qualtrics survey platform for ECA implementing partners to generate surveys to facilitate the

seamless collection and reporting of MODE Framework data.  The MODE Survey Builder offers implementing partners a guided workflow that will generate a ready-to-send MODE survey, allows the addition of custom survey questions, and offers a standard report template for a quick overview of survey results that can be submitted in MyGrants (see section below) to fulfill RPM Reporting Requirements. Use of the Qualtrics survey platform can be utilized at no cost to implementing partners.  Additional information about the MODE Survey Builder can be found here:  https://app.box.com/s/jjr98hmx6deorxj3lwgaxjrwdfec2r91 and here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jus4fRqOTcM.  You can propose use of an alternate survey tool or use the MODE Survey Builder, but if you are utilizing the MODE Survey Builder, you must indicate such in your proposal.

## MyGrants RPM Reporting Requirements

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

## 7.  Cost Share.

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

## 8. Freedom and Democracy Guidelines.

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

## 9. Virtual Exchange Component.

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

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.

## 10. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients.

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

## 11. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial.

ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as "Freedom 250" – a truly global celebration. As the period of performance

for this award is scheduled to cover part or all of calendar year (CY) 2026, the applicant may wish to consider ways the program can celebrate Freedom 250. Any Freedom 250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided Freedom 250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

## 12.    Substantial Involvement.

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

- Analyzing the prospective effect of projects on in-country English teaching institutions.
- Approving the design and development of the public outreach strategy that addresses recruitment of new applicants, support for current participants, engagement with alumni, and raising the profile of the program.
- Reviewing and approving the selection criteria and procedures for, matching selected participants to appropriate approved projects.
- Reviewing and approving a health screening procedure for selected participants and retaining final approving authority for medical clearances.

U.S. embassies are responsible for managing the EL Fellow, Specialist, and Virtual Educator Programs in-country.  The role of U.S. embassies includes:

- Establishing viable partnerships with prospective, priority in-country institutions.
- Developing and submitting project proposals in consultation with in-country institutions to be implemented by EL Fellows, Specialists, and Virtual Educators.
- Selecting participants in consultation with in-country institutions.
- Taking responsibility for participants' in-country safety and well-being, securing the concurrence of the Regional Security Office with the participants' placement and confirming that appropriate medical facilities are available.
- Assisting with locating and obtaining appropriate, secure housing for participants with in-country projects.
- Assisting EL Fellows and Specialists with the host country visa process and complying with receiving country immigration regulations.
- Acting as the EL Fellows', Specialists', Virtual Educators', and ECA's direct point of contact throughout their assignment.
- Conducting an in-country or virtual arrival orientations.
- Monitoring EL Fellows' and Specialists' programs and activities.

## 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 Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which contains guidelines for proposal preparation.

### 1. Budget Format.
Applicants must submit a budget (SF-424A), detailed line-item budget, and a budget narrative. See the PSI section III for more information on the budget requirements.

### 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 the ECA website at https://www.state.gov/eca-grant-opportunities/.

### 2. Department of State Contacts
For questions about this announcement, contact:  Katherine (Kate) Bain, U.S. Department of State, Office of English Language Programs, ECA/A/L**,** 202-992-0680, bainke@state.gov**.**

All correspondence with ECA concerning this solicitation should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.  Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals.  Once the deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

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

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

## Required Registrations

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

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

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

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

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

All federal award recipients must maintain a current registration in the SAM database.  Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in [www.SAM.gov](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](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://afsitsm.servicenowservices.com/ilms/.

## 5. Submission Instructions.

## Method of Submission

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

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

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

## How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

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

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

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

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

## Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues

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

Grants.gov Customer Support
Contact Center Phone:  800 -518-4726
Business Hours:  24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays.
Email:  support@grants.gov

## 6.  Submission Dates and Times.

## Application Deadline Date
**Friday, April 24, 2026, 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 begin the submission process through Grants.gov well in advance of the application deadline.**

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

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

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

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

**PLEASE NOTE:** ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov. Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of the Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting https://grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility

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

## 7. Funding Restrictions for this Announcement.

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

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

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

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

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

c. **Iran Programming**

A critical component of current U.S. government Iran policy is the support for indigenous Iranian voices. The State Department has made the awarding of grants for this purpose a key component of its Iran policy. As a condition of licensing these activities, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has requested the Department of State to follow certain procedures to effectuate the goals of Sections 481(b), 531(a), 571, 582, and 635(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as amended); 18 U.S.C. §§ 23 9A and 2339B; Executive Order 13224; and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6. These licensing conditions mandate that the Department conduct a vetting of potential Iran grantees and sub-grantees for counter-terrorism purposes. To conduct this vetting the Department will collect information from grantees and sub-grantees regarding the identity and background of their key employees and Boards of Directors.

**Note**: To assure that planning for the inclusion of Iran complies with requirements, please contact ECA/A/L – Katherine Bain at bainke@state.gov for additional information.

d. **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 ECA/A/L, Katherine Bain, bainke@state.gov for additional information.

e. **Award Activities in a Designated Area of Combat Operations: SPOT Reporting.**
Each award within areas of combat operations or future contingency operation, as designated by the Secretary of Defense (currently Iraq and Afghanistan), over $150,000 or providing for performance over 30 days must be registered in the Department of Defense maintained Synchronized Pre-deployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) system. Each award shall be registered in SPOT before personnel deployment. The DOS SPOT Program

Manager can assist with entering awards in SPOT. Please send an email to GAOPS@state.gov for information. Information on how to register in SPOT and how to report the total number of recipient personnel deploying under each award will be contained in a Special Provision within each award.

Recipients that do not utilize personnel who are performing a private security function, or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support, can be entered through the SPOT aggregate functionality.
- The recipient will request an aggregate count template from the GO or GOR, who will obtain the template from the Department's SPOT Program Manager (GAOPS@state.gov) by submitting an ILMS Service Now ticket here: http://ilmshelp.state.sbu/ Select "Global Acquisition Request" from the support ticket selection tiles.
- The recipient will complete the template and return to the Department's SPOT Program Manager via Service Now. The SPOT Program Manager will enter the aggregate count data into the SPOT reporting system. The recipient is responsible for updating the aggregate count every quarter by providing updated information via the "Aggregate Count" template to Department SPOT Program Manager for each SPOT award.

Recipients utilizing personnel who ARE performing a private security function; or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support; or who may be eligible for special refugee or immigration status under U.S. regulation must be entered into SPOT individually with all required personal information.
The recipient must enter this information into the SPOT database directly. Unlike the aggregate count process, the Department's SPOT Program Manager does not enter this information into SPOT on behalf of the recipient.
- The recipient starts the process by referring to the DOS Business Rules and registering for an account in SPOT by contacting the DoD SPOT Help desk here: https://spot.dmdc.mil/. Include GAOPS@state.gov when reaching out to DoD.

Recipients with personnel outside of Iraq and/or Afghanistan have no mandate for SPOT use. However, if there are awards needing to interact with DoD elements where a SPOT LOA would benefit, then please send an email to GAOPS@state.gov for information, and to consider setting up the awards in SPOT for that purpose. Ensue your GO and GOR are on the email to GAOPS.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel l, whether employed directly or via contract, are required to adhere to post policies and procedures regarding private security contractors. As specific post policies and procedures differ in scope and applicability, recipients are advised to review post policies carefully and direct any questions to the Embassy Regional Security Office through the GO or GOR.

f. **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.

g. **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.

h. **Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan**
   For grants and cooperative agreements under which the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds $500,000 include the following

Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award <u>for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds $500,000</u>:

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

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

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

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

i. **Prohibition on Unmanned Aircraft Systems Manufactured or Assembled by American Security Drone Act-Covered Foreign Entities**
(a) Definitions.
American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity means an entity included on a list developed and maintained by the Federal Acquisition Security Council (FASC) and published in the System for Award Management (SAM) at https://www.sam.gov

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

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

Unmanned aircraft system means an unmanned aircraft and associated elements (including communication links and the components that control the unmanned

aircraft) that are required for the operator to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system.

(b) Prohibition. Recipients of funding under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (including subawards and subcontracts issued by the recipient) will be prohibited from:
> (1) delivering any FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system, which includes unmanned aircraft (i.e., drones) and associated elements;
> (2) Operating a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system in the performance of the award; and
> (3) Using Federal funds for the purchase or operation of a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system.

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

## 8. Other Submission Requirements.

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

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

c.  Key Personnel
ECA recommends that the applicant identify intended key personnel positions via an asterisk (*) or other marking in the proposal budget, budget narrative, or a separate appendix.  If not provided in the application, recipients must submit the names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued.  Applicants should also identify what proportion of their time will be used in support of the program. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions.

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

## 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 Public Diplomacy sections overseas, State Department regional bureaus, or other State Department offices, as appropriate.  All reviewers, including the ECA grant panels, will review any eligible proposals based on the criteria below.

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

## 2. Review Criteria.

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

a. **Program planning and ability to achieve program objectives:**
   Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity.  Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.  Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible.  The proposal should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. Proposals should demonstrate a publicity and recruitment plan that allows for the greatest dissemination of information to professionals in the areas of English language education and related fields.

b. **Multiplier effect/impact and follow-on activities:**
   Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.  The proposal should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) which ensures that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.

c. **Institutional capacity and track record:**
Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals.  The proposal should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past ECA awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by the Bureau Grants Staff.  ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

d. **Cost effectiveness/cost sharing:**
The overhead and staffing components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible.  All costs should be necessary and appropriate.  The proposal should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

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.  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.

## 3. Indirect Costs

If two or more applications receive equivalent scores based on the evaluation criteria outlined in this NOFO, preference will be given to the applicant with the

lower indirect cost rate, as consistent with Executive Order 14332, Section 4(b)(iii). This preference will only be applied as a tie-breaking mechanism and does not supersede the primary evaluation criteria.

## 4. Risk Review

Under the merit review as required by 2 CFR 200.206, prior to making a Federal Award, the Department will review and consider the following risk factors:
   a. Financial stability
   b. Management systems and standards
   c. History of performance
   d. Audit reports and findings
   e. Ability to effectively implement requirements

## 5. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov.

The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available 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),

- o Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
- o Terminating agreements pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

- 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.

## 3. Branding and Marking

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

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

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

## I.  Other Information

## For Informational Purposes Only - 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.  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