



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 John McCain Study of the U.S. Institute for Student Leaders
on the Rule of Law and Public Service
Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017914
Application Deadline: May 11, 2026

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A. Basic Information

1. Overview.

Funding Opportunity Title	FY26 John McCain Study of the U.S. Institute for Student Leaders on the Rule of Law and Public Service
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0017914
Announcement Type	New Cooperative Agreement
Deadline for Applications	May 11, 2026 11:59pm Eastern (Washington DC time)
Assistance Listing Number	19.009
Length of Performance Period	18 to 24 months
Number of Awards Anticipated	1 award
Award Amount	Approximately \$400,000
Total Available Funding	\$400,000, pending availability of funds

Type of Funding	FY26 Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs (ECE) Funds
Funding Instrument Type	Cooperative Agreement
Anticipated Award Date	September 1, 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 the subsequent fiscal year, it is ECA's intent to renew this award for one additional, consecutive fiscal year, before openly competing it again.

2. Executive Summary.

Priority Region: Participants will represent priority countries from all six world regions.

The Office of Academic Exchange Programs, ECA, invites proposal submissions for the design and implementation of the John McCain Study of the U.S. Institute for Student Leaders on the Rule of Law and Public Service (McCain SUSI). The SUSI will take place over five weeks in summer 2027. See details in section C. Program Description.

The McCain SUSI is an intensive academic exchange program that provides a group of approximately 20 foreign undergraduate students and recent graduates from military and law enforcement colleges and universities with a deeper understanding of American leadership and how it has shaped global stability and security.

The McCain SUSI will include an approximately four-week academic residency at a U.S. educational institution and an approximately one-week integrated academic field experience that will bring participants to a U.S. region distinct from their residency location. The program should include opportunities for continued follow-on engagement once participants return home.

The award recipient will be responsible for planning, overseeing, and implementing the program. Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization.

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 \$400,000. 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 McCain SUSI is an intensive academic exchange program that provides a group of approximately 20 foreign undergraduate students and recent graduates who are pursuing careers in the military and law enforcement with a deeper understanding of American leadership and how it has shaped global stability and security. The goal is to deliver quality U.S. studies content and build productive relationships with emerging leaders in defense and law enforcement entities around the world. The program will provide participants with an appreciation of the country's founding principles and democratic values. The McCain SUSI should celebrate American achievements and innovations through academic sessions, coursework, and site visits.

3. Program Specific Guidelines.

The McCain SUSI should be approximately five weeks in length. Participants should spend approximately four weeks at an accredited U.S. college or university campus for an intensive academic residency and approximately one week on an academic field experience. The academic field experience should bring participants to a U.S. region distinct from their residency location. Once participants return home, the program should provide opportunities for continued follow-on engagement activities.

The Academic Residency component should:

1. Consist of a carefully integrated series of academic sessions that may include lectures, case studies, panel presentations, seminar discussions, debates, simulations, individual and group classroom activities, site visits, interactive workshops, and reading assignments. Sessions should be interactive, encourage critical thinking, and allow time for the exchange of views among participants and presenters.
2. Include engagement with American military, veterans, and law enforcement professionals; discussions about American stability and security efforts globally; and an overview of the U.S. government, military, and law enforcement institutions.
3. Include engagement with local American communities, which may include home hospitality and holiday celebrations.
3. Be tailored for the particular group of foreign students and include discussions of issues relevant to the McCain SUSI theme or countries/regions represented. It must not replicate an existing lecture, course, survey, or graduate seminar designed for degree candidates.
4. Encourage active student participation in the educational process. The curriculum design should consider that participants may have little or no prior knowledge of the United States and different levels of English proficiency.
7. Include cultural site visits that will reinforce the academic curriculum and deepen participants' understanding of historical and contemporary milestones demonstrating America's great legacies, including landmarks and monuments.
8. Be intensive, yet leave sufficient free time for individual interests and exercise. The program schedule should include adequate time for reading and preparation of class assignments. Supervised, optional cultural and weekend activities (such as group nights at

the theater, concerts, and sporting events) where participants can celebrate and experience American culture.

The academic field experience for the McCain SUSI should:

1. Directly complement and reinforce the academic residency.
2. Be arranged and led by the academic director and principal staff.
3. Be approximately one-week-long. It should expose the participants to a region distinct from that of their academic residency. If appropriate, the academic field experience segment may be interspersed with the academic residency, though the total time allotted for the academic field experience should be approximately seven days.
4. Include an appropriate mix of professional-level meetings relevant to the McCain SUSI's objectives, visits to American cultural institutions, and recreational activities.

The proposal must specify the proposed academic field experience location(s). Please note, staff escorts travelling on the academic field experience must have demonstrated qualifications to accompany exchange visitors such as experience working with international audiences, accompanying international or domestic group travel, and/or managing health, safety, and emergency situations during travel.

Please note: The Office of Academic Exchange Programs may request that the award recipient modify the academic residency and/or academic field experience to protect the health, safety, or well-being of participants.

Program Administration

ECA intends to issue one cooperative agreement of up to \$400,000 that will support the design, oversight, and implementation of the McCain SUSI in FY 2026 with a one renewal year in FY 2027, pending satisfactory implementation of the program and the availability of funds.

The award recipient is responsible for the conception and structure of the program. It is essential that proposals provide a full, detailed, and comprehensive narrative describing how the recipient will achieve the objectives of the program. All proposals will demonstrate the institution's administrative and program management capacities, thematic expertise, and/or experience working with students with military and/or law enforcement backgrounds.

Program Dates

Pending the availability of funds, the anticipated award for the cooperative agreement will begin on or about September 1, 2026, and end on or about September 1, 2028. The McCain SUSI should last approximately 35 days (plus arrival and departure days). The summer 2027 exchange will begin no earlier than June 1, 2027, and should conclude no later than August 15, 2027.

Participants

Participants in the McCain SUSI will be selected based on merit and will be highly motivated undergraduate students and recent graduates from military and law enforcement colleges and universities. Participants will ideally have limited to no international experience and must be proficient in English; interpretation will not be available.

McCain SUSI participants may represent all six world regions. U.S. missions in eligible countries will nominate candidates and ECA will confirm eligibility. The recipient will NOT participate in the selection of participants. ECA will send a final list of participants to the award recipient.

4. Recipient Responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

- A. Program Planning and Management
- B. Program Administration
- C. Logistical Coordination
- D. Alumni Outreach/Follow-on Activities

A. Program Planning and Management

1. Provide overall coordination and management of the John McCain Study of the U.S. Institute for Student Leaders on the Rule of Law and Public Service (McCain SUSI);
2. Design, oversee, and implement the McCain SUSI in the United States for an approximately four-week academic residency on a U.S. college or university campus and an approximately one-week academic field experience. The McCain SUSI will include approximately 20 undergraduate students and recent graduates from military and law enforcement colleges and universities;
3. Oversee the program curriculum and other activities, ensuring that they align with Department goals and objectives;
4. Prepare DS-2019 forms for all participants and send these forms to the U.S. embassy or consulate well in advance of program start dates to allow for J-1 visa interview scheduling;
5. Enroll participants in ECA's health benefits program, Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE), and/or other health benefits plan as directed by ECA for the duration of the program and issue health benefits identification cards for each participant;
6. Ensure that each participant completes and signs all required pre-program forms provided by ECA;
7. Develop health and safety protocols to protect the welfare of all participants;
8. In coordination with U.S. embassies and consulates, arrange and purchase international round-trip travel for participants;
9. In coordination with U.S. embassies and consulates, arrange and purchase any pre-program travel related to visa issuance;
10. In conjunction with U.S. embassies and consulates, make logistical and administrative arrangements for participants, such as pre-departure information, airport pick-up and drop-off, lodging and meals, domestic travel, medical treatment, and program funds disbursement, including travel allowances; communicate this information to participants prior to the program start date;
11. Promptly inform ECA of any serious incidents or issues involving participants that may affect their participation in the program (including, but not limited to, medical emergencies and medical evacuations for mental or physical health issues; 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 related queries from the media or others. Provide timely progress reports on any necessary follow-up action;
12. Develop and implement, in coordination with ECA, a communications and digital media strategy to promote the program;
 13. Ensure strict compliance with State Department branding and signage requirements at events, in remarks, in program documentation, and in online content;
 14. Provide participants with follow-on guidance and resources and facilitate continued interaction among participants after the program;
 15. Create and maintain a database of program alumni that includes alumni success stories; share these stories with ECA throughout the year;
 16. Conduct program performance monitoring and evaluation according to the MODE framework requirements as outlined in section C.5. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the NOFO;
 17. Manage and distribute ECA funds for this activity;
 18. Submit required financial and program reports to ECA on time and provide weekly updates to the program office during the implementation period;
 19. Provide reasonable accommodations for participant needs, including disabilities and medical or dietary restrictions, as necessary;
 20. Prepare and print certificates of completion for participants who successfully complete their respective programs; and
 21. Assume overall responsibility for complying with all applicable tax treaties and Federal, state, and local laws on tax withholding and reporting for participants.

B. Program Administration

Applicants should discuss their capacity to successfully manage international exchange programs, including institutional strengths such as relevant experience, departments, and major administrative units. Proposals should include a staffing plan that details how staff will fulfill responsibilities.

The award recipient must designate an **academic director** who will be in-person through the academic program in its entirety to ensure the continuity, coherence, and integration of all aspects of the academic program, including the academic field experience. The academic director will design the syllabus, ensuring activities align with the themes and goals of the overall program. The academic director must demonstrate experience for their role in planning and implementing the program, overseeing its day-to-day management, and monitoring program participants. In addition, a designated **administrative director** or coordinator must demonstrate experience for their role in overseeing all administrative support services, including program participant supervision, participant health and safety, budget, logistics, reporting, and other administrative arrangements. Typically, the administrative director serves as ECA's primary point of contact. The administrative director should plan to attend an administrative briefing that will take place either virtually or in-person in Washington, DC, at least six weeks before the start of the program.

Other staff may be designated as appropriate. Applicant organizations may choose to incorporate qualified "cultural ambassadors," "graduate mentors," or another appropriate name. The "ambassadors" must exhibit cultural sensitivity, an understanding of the program's objectives, and

a willingness to accompany the foreign students throughout the McCain SUSI. Program coordinators and/or graduate student assistants may be employed to carry out clerical duties and to assist with the day-to-day concerns and needs of participants, but they should not be the principal point of contact for participants' administrative concerns.

C. Logistical Coordination

1. **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 ASPE health benefits program and to navigate the complex healthcare system in the United States. The recipient and any sub-recipients should also help participants understand and navigate any national, state, local, and campus health or safety policies.
2. **Housing and meal arrangements** are an important dimension of program planning and must be discussed in detail in the proposal. In general, participants should be housed on campus in university dorms, similar designated university housing, or other suitable locations, ideally within walking distance to daily classes. Participants would ideally have access to kitchen facilities, either in their own rooms or in a common room. 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. Institute staff should consider any dietary, religious, medical, or living requirements and be prepared to discuss any challenges with the participants. Institute staff should consider conducting a pre-arrival survey of participant dietary and/or religious needs to better accommodate their needs. To the extent permitted by budget limitations, participants should 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.
3. **Participant forms** are required from each participant. Required forms include, but are not limited to, the McCain SUSI terms and conditions, a medical form, and a media release form. The recipient is responsible for disbursing and collecting signed forms from participants. The recipient should notify ECA of any potential concerns or issues. All forms should be safeguarded since they contain Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
4. **Virtual pre-departure orientation (PDO) workshops** should be organized by the recipient for all participants to prepare for the program. Topics may include, but are not limited to: introduction to program themes, setting expectations, U.S. cultural norms, cross-cultural adjustment, health and safety guidelines and practices, and logistics. Pre-departure materials should be available to participants online or emailed at least six weeks before the start of the program.
5. **An administrative orientation** to the United States and to the campus for the participants should address administrative details of the program, identify campus and local resources, review safety and security procedures, and provide general information that will facilitate the participants' adjustment to daily life in a new environment. Important topics will be campus safety and general security tips, medical issues and protocols, transportation, per diem, and availability of foods to which participants are accustomed or that meet specific dietary requirements.
6. **An academic orientation** should provide participants with a concise overview of the program, including principal objectives and major themes. The academic director should discuss guidelines for behavior that encourage active participation, respect for the views of

- other participants, concise comments and questions that keep the students on-topic, and other parameters that will promote effective discussion throughout the program.
7. **Opening and closing events** (e.g., luncheon, dinner, or reception) should formally inaugurate and close the program. These events typically include representatives from the Institute as well as individuals from the larger community.
 8. **Access to resources** should be arranged, including campus libraries, computer and internet facilities, gymnasium or fitness center, health services, on-campus disability resources, counseling services, and local and national newspapers, periodicals, radio, and television. Institutes should conduct a formal orientation to university library services during the first week of the program and should provide participants with computer training and technical support, as needed. Reasonable accommodations should be made for any participants with disabilities. Applicants should budget approximately \$2,000 for reasonable accommodations for participants with disabilities.
 9. **Monitoring and evaluation** should be conducted according to the MODE framework requirements as outlined in section C.5. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the NOFO. The recipient should ensure participants have time reserved to complete required survey(s). Copies of surveys should be available to the ECA program officer upon request. Additionally, the recipient will be responsible for collecting alumni success stories to share with the ECA program office.
 10. **Travel allowances** should be disbursed to each participant to support in-transit costs incurred during travel to and from the United States, including visa travel. The ECA program office suggests approximately \$125 per participant (roundtrip) for visa travel and incoming/outgoing allowances. Potential costs include accommodations, visa travel per diem, transit fares, or baggage fees.

D. Alumni Outreach/Follow-on Activities

Proposals should provide plans for continued follow-on activities (with minimal ECA support) that ensure ECA-supported programs are not isolated events. Proposed activities for alumni must reflect the goals and objectives of the program. The proposal should include an outline of follow-on programming (including a timeline), information on how it will be coordinated with existing alumni efforts, and a description of how the applicant will foster and maintain long-term linkages with alumni. Examples of successful past follow-on activities include, but are not limited to: structured mentoring programs, alumni reunions or workshops, monthly web discussions, reverse exchanges for Americans, and/or distance learning opportunities for alumni. Applicants should incorporate the online community on the International Exchange Alumni website (<https://alumni.state.gov>) into their alumni outreach plans.

Follow-on activities should be well-developed but also remain flexible enough to allow for changes based on participants' needs. Alumni activities should be financed using the line item budgeted for follow-on activities (up to \$5,000) and the applicant organization may contribute additional funds through cost sharing. Please refer to the PSI for additional information.

5. 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/>)
- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
 - Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities
 - ♣ E1.1.01: Percent of participants reporting that their program experience offered opportunities to engage with other cultures
 - ♣ E1.1.04: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government (core indicator)
 - ♣ E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator)
 - ♣ E1.1.10: Percent of foreign participants who traveled to the United States for the first time during their program (core indicator)
 - ♣ E1.1.12: Percent of foreign participants indicating a change in understanding of third-party countries' cultures and values
 - ♣ E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American people (core indicator)
 - ♣ E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator)
 - ♣ E1.1.19: Percent of foreign participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries
 - ♣ E2.0.01: Percent of foreign participants that volunteer in their host communities
 - ♣ E2.0.04: Number of hours that foreign participants spend volunteering in their host communities

- o Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster participants’ belief that civic engagement benefits communities/countries
 - ♣ E2.2.01: Percent of participants who have more confidence in their ability to have an impact in their home country (core indicator)
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
 - ♣ E3.0.02: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of Americans (core indicator)
 - ♣ E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries
 - ♣ E4.0.01: 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
 - o Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
 - ♣ E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
 - ♣ E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts (core indicator)
- Objective 8: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau’s resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships
 - ♣ E8.0.03: Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

Performance Monitoring Plans (PMPs)

ECA recommends the use of a PMP to serve as the primary reference document for performance monitoring for this award. If used, the PMP is an important part of any proposal, as it outlines how the applicant plans to track progress towards the proposed program’s goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions. A PMP document that includes all MODE Framework indicators is a part of this solicitation’s attachments. Specific instructions on how to modify the PMP to be responsive to this solicitation are included in that document; 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 solicitation. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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. Proposals should demonstrate the organization's capacity to provide innovative options for virtual activities to substitute for in-person engagement for program participants. Organizations should consider how they will implement virtual exchange activities, given the potential limits to internet access from participants in some locations and while continuing to advance foreign policy objectives and achieve lasting benefits for U.S. citizens and international participants.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Substantial Involvement.

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

1. ECA will make determinations on eligible countries, make all final participant selections, and provide a list of selected finalists to the implementing partner; and
2. ECA may request that the recipient make modifications to the academic residency and/or educational travel components of the program to protect the health, safety, or well-being of participants.
3. ECA will review and approve all public-facing materials prior to dissemination as part of a communication plan that will be developed in partnership with the applicant.

D. Application Contents and Format

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

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the PSI, 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.

Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

The provided budget format is provided as an aid in organizing the budget, it is suggested but not required as a submission format for your proposal budget.

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: Tania Jazyanka and Brittany Bursa, U.S. Department of State, Office of Academic Exchange Programs, ECA/A/E/USS, at 202-718-8378 and 202-430-4019, and at JazyankaT@state.gov and BursaBL@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. Please begin your registration as early as possible.

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

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

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

Exemptions

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See [2 CFR 25.110](https://www.ecfr.gov/title-2/chapter-200/subchapter-1/part-201/subpart-110/section-201.110) 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 justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

4. Required Registration with MyGrants.

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

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

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

5. Submission Instructions.

Method of Submission

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

Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures

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

How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

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

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

How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov

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

Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues

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

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

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

Email: support@grants.gov

6. Submission Dates and Times.

Application Deadline Date.

Monday, May 11, 2026 Eastern (Washington, DC time)

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 Tania Jazyanka at 202-718-8378 or JazyankaT@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 Tania Jazyanka at 202-718-8378 or JazyankaT@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. Ensure your GO and GOR are on the email to GAOPS.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel, 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:

- i. 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;
- ii. 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 for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE).

Applicants are advised that IHEs must certify the following at the time of award, and that this certification requirement must be included in any subaward agreements to IHEs:

- Its compliance in all respects with section 1011f of title 20, United States Code, and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements is material for purposes of section 3729 of title 31, United States Code, and for receipt of appropriate Federal grant funds.

h. Prohibition on Unmanned Aircraft Systems Manufactured or Assembled by American Security Drone Act-Covered Foreign Entities

(a) *Definitions.*

American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity means an entity included on a list developed and maintained by the Federal Acquisition Security Council (FASC) and published in the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov>

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

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

Unmanned aircraft system means an unmanned aircraft and associated elements (including communication links and the components that control the unmanned aircraft) that are required for the operator to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system.

(b) Prohibition.

Recipients of funding under this 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. **Quality of the program idea and ability to achieve program objectives:** Proposals should be original, well-defined, and relevant to ECA's mission. A detailed staff work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Proposals should clearly state the program's aims and purpose and demonstrate how your institution will meet them. The objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible.
- b. **Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs and responsible fiscal management (past exchange programs need not have been ECA-funded). ECA will consider the past performance of prior ECA recipients, including the timely submission of reports, and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be fully qualified to achieve the project's goals.
- c. **Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should discuss provisions made for follow-up with returned participants to establish longer-term individual and institutional linkages. Proposals should also provide a plan for continued follow-on activities (with minimal ECA support), ensuring that ECA-supported programs are not isolated events. Please see Recipient Responsibilities under section C.4.
- d. **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.

- e. **Cost-effectiveness/Cost Share:** Proposals should keep the overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost share through other private sector support and institutional direct funding contributions.

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 at 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. The award or cooperative agreement will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer in ECA's Grants Division 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.

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

- [Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#) (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
 - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
 - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
 - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
 - Terminating agreements pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340). For the avoidance of doubt, the Department has sole discretion over the determination that an award no longer effectuates program goals or agency priorities, and this provision permits awards to be terminated at the Department's convenience, including when it determines that the award no longer advances the national interest.

- [2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT](#)

- [2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION](#)
- [2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS](#)
- [2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE \(FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE\)](#)
- [2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY](#)
- [2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS](#)
- [U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#)
- Recipients must comply with all applicable Executive Orders A searchable list can be found in the Federal Register: <https://www.federalregister.gov/>

2. Reporting.

Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify what reports are required and 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 reports shall be due 90 days after the reporting period; 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. **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 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

Adherence To All Regulations Governing the J Visa

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

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

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

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

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