Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO):
FY 2023 BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund
Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0009496
Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.451
Key Date/Application Deadline: May 10, 2023

Executive Summary: The Office of Private Sector Exchange (BridgeUSA) of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for the administration of the FY 2023 BridgeUSA Global Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Scholarship Fund. The Office plans to issue one cooperative agreement of approximately $360,000, pending the availability of funds, to implement the BridgeUSA STEM Scholarship Fund in the academic and/or professional categories. U.S. accredited colleges/ universities, U.S. consortia of accredited colleges and universities including consortia of community colleges, or U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) who are interested in collaborating with ECA to promote STEM education and career STEM initiatives in the United States, may submit proposals to provide between 20 and 30 STEM scholarships to foreign university students, scholars, and professionals evenly distributed across eligible countries in **Africa (AF), East Asia and Pacific (EAP),** and **Western Hemisphere (WHA) regions**. Exchange visitors will be recruited from any of the following eligible academic and professional J-1 visa categories: **College/University Students, Interns, Research Scholars,** and **Trainees**. U.S. consortiums representing universities/colleges are encouraged to apply. Proposals must include a focus on climate change and should include U.S. partnership collaboration with institutions that focus on various STEM fields shared across continents, including improving understanding of climate systems, developing precision agricultural capabilities, enhancing risk assessment tools, and increasing societal resilience in the face of catastrophic natural or human induced disasters.

The award recipient should plan to select 7-10 candidates each from the eligible regions. The award recipient must demonstrate capability to recruit participants from **all** eligible regions and should detail a plan to recruit broadly from the list of eligible countries (see section C.2.1. for the full list of eligible countries from each region).

ECA reserves the right to add or remove eligible countries and/or regions prior to the issuance of the award. The proposal must demonstrate the applicant's flexibility to work with ECA and demonstrate the interest and ability to deliver customized experiences. No invitations to participate in the BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund may be issued without U.S. Department of State approval.

The program will be administered over 36 months from the date the award is made. The award recipient may choose to place exchange visitors as a single cohort, or in multiple cohorts throughout the duration of the program administration period. Duration of exchanges may range from the regulatory minimum of three weeks to the regulatory maximum for each

eligible category (outlined in Section C.2.). The scholarships should cover exchange visitors' program fees, including placement at a U.S.-based host organization, health benefits coverage, visa fees, SEVIS-related fees, and airfare. Exchange visitors may receive stipends/wages from their placement host organizations. Exchange visitors are not to be compensated through grant/award funds. The award recipient shall abide by the rules and regulations governing the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) as stipulated at 22 CFR Part 62. The award recipient may send exchange visitors from any of the eligible categories (or a combination of categories). The award recipient must be able to issue DS-2019 forms for the category or categories selected. If not currently designated in the selected category/categories, applying organizations must identify a designated J-1 sponsor in the selected category/categories as a sub-award recipient in order to fulfill the DS-2019 form requirement. Applications must include a Letter of Commitment from the chosen sub-award recipient as part of the proposal.

The BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund recipients may be subject to 212(e) 2-year home residency requirement. More information on this requirement can be found at travel.state.gov.

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.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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.

Purpose: In order to enhance the U.S. Department of State's engagement with BridgeUSA program exchange visitors in support of U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives, ECA's BridgeUSA is issuing a NOFO for $360,000, pending the availability of FY 2023 funds, to conduct the FY 2023 the BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund. This is an opportunity for foreign students and professionals to study and train to the United States for longer periods of time so they can better understand the United States and Americans, while also developing skills to address key climate-related issues. The BridgeUSA programs are a unique opportunity to experience first-hand American culture and traditions, share knowledge and collaborate on transnational issues, and develop skills critical to their home country.

Background: BridgeUSA supports ECA's mission by facilitating educational and cultural exchange programs for approximately 300,000 exchange visitors who come to the United States each year to participate in 13 different program categories. BridgeUSA designates and monitors approximately 1,500 "sponsor organizations" that recruit, place, and monitor "exchange visitors" from more than 200 countries and territories. Through people-to-people exchanges, BridgeUSA supports the Department's foreign policy objectives and strategic priorities, including creating resilient communities, addressing disinformation by supporting civil society, open transparent institutions, global health, climate change, emerging technology, women and underrepresented groups in STEM, diversity and inclusion, and human rights. Since 2006, over four million exchange visitors have participated in BridgeUSA programs. Exchange visitors who experience successful BridgeUSA programs become "citizen ambassadors" who share their new understanding of American values with their friends and family upon return home. In partnership with designated sponsors, BridgeUSA recognizes that the foundation of successful exchanges is ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of all exchange visitors. Other factors that contribute to successful experiences include safe and secure housing and transportation; integration into the community/workplace; and acquisition of new skills, including improved English language proficiency. The Department and program sponsors continuously seek ways to improve all programmatic components to ensure the development of a large cadre of program alumni who serve as lifelong citizen ambassadors.

This cooperative agreement seeks to further expand BridgeUSA's engagement with exchange visitors from underrepresented regions by offering BridgeUSA scholarships focusing on students, scholars, and professionals working or studying in STEM fields from AF, EAP, and WHA. STEM fields are defined by ECA on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) STEM Designated Degree Program List, which is a complete list of fields of study that DHS considers to be science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) fields. Additional information can be found at: https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/stemList2022.pdf.

The purpose of the BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund is to provide underserved foreign college and university students, scholars, and professionals with opportunities to interact with U.S. citizens, experience U.S. culture while sharing their own cultures with Americans they meet, travel in the United States, and train or conduct research in fields related to their areas of study or expertise. The BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund would further ECA's goal of increasing the number of STEM focused educational and cultural exchanges in the United States. Following the issuance of the Joint Statement of Principles in Support of International Education in 2021, and the release of the National Security Strategy, ECA worked with the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to create the *BridgeUSA Early Career STEM Research Initiative,* which launched in early 2022.

In close coordination with BridgeUSA, the award recipient should be prepared to administer the BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund in accordance with 22 CFR Part 62 EVP regulations, and as specified in the cooperative agreement, including but not limited to recruitment, screening and selection of candidates, distribution of scholarship funds to exchange visitors, placement of exchange visitors with pre-selected host organizations, providing pre-arrival and in-country orientations, monitoring of program exchange visitors, and implementing a performance monitoring and evaluation plan to measure program effectiveness.

The BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund award recipient will have the primary oversight responsibility for recruitment and selection of a diverse group of exchange visitors, as well as placing exchange visitors with vetted host organizations. Participating U.S. Embassies will be encouraged to identify eligible exchange visitors and submit candidate nominations to the award recipient through the ECA program office. The U.S. Embassies and award recipient will publicly award the STEM scholarships, provide exchange visitors with additional screening, host organization placements, and support for the duration of their scholarships. The award recipient will work in partnership with BridgeUSA to coordinate the administration of the exchange program, as outlined in 22 CFR Part 62 EVP regulations (Subpart A and Subpart B), support networking and alumni activities for program exchange visitors, and develop a robust program performance monitoring and evaluation system to measure program effectiveness. This will include developing program marketing and recruitment resources, administering pre-arrival and in-country orientations, and managing all other program-related activities. Additionally, the award recipient will launch and facilitate, for the duration of this cooperative agreement, a BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund social media site (e.g., LinkedIn; Facebook) for exchange visitors and alumni, who must sign a written media consent waiver. The social media platform will be used for current and former exchange visitors to share experiences, exchange ideas, and stay connected beyond the end of the program. The award recipient will work with BridgeUSA to connect exchange visitors and alumni with ECA's International Exchange Alumni network.

Exchanges should focus on climate change and specific regional focuses are also encouraged, to include the following: for visitors from AF, emerging technologies and eco-innovation in the field of waste management; for visitors from EAP, clean-energy innovation and deployment, climate adaptation, resilience, and preparedness; for visitors from WHA, the intersection of environment and public health. Competitive proposals will provide examples of projects and/or research that exchange visitors may engage in for these fields at host placement organizations.

In AF, the award recipient is encouraged to identify candidates from polytechnic institutes in the eligible countries. For this NOFO, the term polytechnic is defined as an institute of technology and is also known as technological university; university of technology; technological educational institute; technological college; vocational training institute; polytechnic university or just polytechnic. All these names commonly refer to institutions of tertiary education e.g., universities or colleges that specialize in engineering, technology,

applied science, and natural sciences. In many countries, polytechnics focus mainly on applied skills or experiential learning. Polytechnic education combines the in-depth study found at universities with practical, technology-based skills training. Polytechnics offer flexible learning pathways and a more affordable education for students across East and Southern Africa. ECA and U.S. Embassies have identified flagship polytechnic institutes in the eligible countries and can assist the award recipient with establishing these partnerships.

Prior to departing for the U.S., all individuals selected are required to have a pre-departure orientation and be enrolled in ECA's ASPE health benefits plan or alternative plan that meets J-1 visa requirements. Upon completion of their programs, exchange visitors shall be required to return to their home country and contribute to the goals of their respective host-country organizations, as a condition of accepting Department of State sponsorship. Exchange visitors are supervised by host organization's specific location who have full supervisory authority and receive direct and/or indirect guidance and supervision from the staff of the award recipient and host organization during their U.S. programs.

Goals: The mission of BridgeUSA is to provide opportunities for international candidates looking to travel and gain experience in the United States. The multifaceted programs enable foreign nationals to come to the United States to teach, study, conduct research, demonstrate special skills or receive on the job training for periods ranging from a few weeks to several years. BridgeUSA's mission – to increase mutual understanding between Americans and people of other countries – remains vital to U.S. national security and building people-to-people connections around the world. Through the FY 2023 BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund, BridgeUSA aims to:

1. Promote mutual understanding and lasting partnerships between exchange visitors from foreign countries and the United States;
2. Provide opportunities for exchange visitors to collaborate and share ideas, approaches, and strategies to develop solutions to pressing local and global challenges;
3. Increase Americans' global competitiveness by expanding education to restore the nation's historic strengths by ensuring our policy incentivizes the world's best and brightest to study and work in America;
4. Pursue a science and technology approach to climate change and migration;
5. Increase STEM research, training, and teaching opportunities for exchange visitors from priority countries that advance U.S. foreign policy objectives;
6. Build a global network of like-minded professionals committed to creating positive change in their workplaces and communities.

Competitive proposals should be designed to achieve outcomes that may include:

- Supporting civil society organizations and natural resource defenders to meaningfully and safely contribute to national, regional, and global environmental policy development;
- Addressing the challenges of climate change, governance, corruption, post-conflict recovery, and a just and equitable transition to a clean economy;
- Ensuring the public has access to transparent and credible information on climate issues, including by supporting responsible media coverage, the role of independent media in climate coverage, and access to public records on environmental degradation and climate change;
- Enabling all stakeholders to safely coordinate and cooperate in their local, national, and regional-level advocacy for preserving natural resources and tackling climate change effects.

Program Administration and Implementation:

Pre-departure Information, Advising, and Support
Pre-departure support must be coordinated closely across ECA, U.S. Embassies and host/ placement organizations. Support will include participation in pre-departure orientations, the development of printed and electronic pre-departure materials, access to English-language learning materials, and direct engagement with host organizations prior to departure to assess any needs for individual program accommodations and to ensure readiness for travel and participation in the program. The applicant is encouraged to propose additional virtual or in-country programming between the cooperating partner/host organization and exchange visitors, including with program alumni, to support exchange visitors prior to departure. Programming and materials should be designed for exchange visitors who may be traveling abroad for the first time.

U.S. Arrival and Pre-program Orientation
A U.S. arrival orientation must be provided for all exchange visitors prior to the start of the program activities year, anticipated in fall 2023. Programs shall be no less than 40 hours of orientation and occur over a span of no more than three weeks. Applicant organizations must clearly justify the length of time proposed. Award recipients may choose to stagger orientations, or hold separate orientations depending on category.

The pre-program activities must provide incoming exchange visitors with English language immersion and orientation to U.S. academic and organizational culture to improve their readiness for a U.S. higher education system or corporate environment. In addition to building familiarity with the resources available at host organizations, the pre-program preparedness also aims to facilitate success outside of the host organization by building skills for success and familiarizing exchange visitors with expectations for behavior and program participation, the rules and regulations of the host organizations, and the laws of the U.S. communities with a

focus on navigating topics such as gender and diversity within the U.S. context. The pre-program orientation must also provide scholars with opportunities for cultural exchange as well as foster a basic understanding of current issues in U.S. society and U.S. social values to foster richer intercultural exchange and engagement with their host communities. Participants must also have opportunities to share their cultures and perspectives with Americans. For example, activities may include exchange visitor presentations about their country or culture to college classes, local schools, and community groups.

Current BridgeUSA program eligibility requirements state that applicants need a basic working knowledge of the English language as demonstrated by meeting standardized minimum testing scores or hailing from countries or schools where English language is the main mode of instruction in schools. Orientations should be planned with the knowledge that all exchange visitors should have at least this level of English proficiency at the start of the program.

Health, Safety, and Security of Exchange Visitors

Proposals must demonstrate how the program administrator will safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of exchange visitors in the program design and through exchange visitor monitoring. Proposals shall also include flexibilities and contingency planning to demonstrate the proposed institutions' ability to respond to needs that may arise during implementation of the program. For example, best practices for responding to local, national, or international events or emergencies, such as the Coronavirus pandemic and/or natural disasters, should be incorporated into planning and implementation for program exchange visitors. Proposals should include clear protocols on responding to exchange visitor emergencies.

Alumni Engagement, Follow-on Activities, and Reporting

Alumni activities are an important part of the ECA's academic exchange programs. Activities ease the returnees' transitions home, strengthen the BridgeUSA alumni network, and will build the BridgeUSA brand. Alumni programming in the form of professional development activities, virtual programming, blogs, newsletters, and use of social media provides critical program follow-on and maximizes and extends the benefit of the exchange visitors' experiences in the United States. Proposals should outline how host organizations will creatively organize and support alumni activities in close collaboration with ECA and the appropriate U.S. Embassies. Proposals should describe how long-term links with BridgeUSA alumni will be fostered and maintained. Proposals should provide a purposeful plan with an anticipated timeline for continued follow-on BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund and country-specific alumni engagement using both ECA and BridgeUSA resources and networks and in partnership with the U.S. Embassy. Plans for alumni engagement should be designed to be sustainable without continued ECA support.

Alumni tracking is critical for measuring outcomes of the program and for the implementation of worthwhile follow-on programs. Exchange visitor and alumni data must be transferable to the database maintained at ECA. Alumni impact stories and social media properties must also

be transferred to ECA at the end of any award agreement. Recipients are required to collect, maintain, store, and transfer data on exchange visitors/alumni, ensuring personally identifiable information (PII) is protected per ECA guidelines. Proposals must demonstrate capacity to manage exchange visitor data per ECA guidelines, respond to ECA data requests, and maintain or transfer historical records beyond the duration of the cooperative agreement.

Organizational Capacity: Applicant organizations must demonstrate in their proposals their capacity for conducting international educational and cultural exchanges, supporting exchange alumni engagement activities, and providing substantive programming for students and scholars. Proposals should also illustrate in their proposals the breadth of their experience working in international exchange and a record of flexibility and adaptability in programming under short timelines or challenging conditions. Proposals should include concrete examples in which the organization has responded quickly to rapidly evolving circumstances, including, if possible, examples that demonstrate the ability to recruit exchange visitors from a diverse and geographically dispersed community.

Partner/Host Organizations: Applicant organizations must provide examples of host organizations with whom they would partner, and competitive proposals will provide letters of commitment from these host organizations as part of their proposal. In addition, applicants must demonstrate the breadth of their experience working with exchange visitor students and scholars, including professional development programming, virtual engagement, and alumni networks. If utilizing the Intern and/or Trainee program, the proposal should also detail the organization's experience developing Training/Internship Placement Plans (T/IPP), as exchange visitors in these categories will require structured training using T/IPP Form DS-7002.

For this program, duration of participation for all categories shall be no less than three weeks. Maximum duration of programs are as follows: no more than 12 months for the Intern category; no more than three years for the Research Scholar category, and no more than 18 months for the Trainee category. For the College/University Student category, duration of participants should be no longer than three years for degree students, no more than 24 months for non-degree students, and no more than 12 months for the Student Intern program (see section C.2). Program activities should be individualized to meet the needs of the individual intern, trainee, college/university student, or research scholar. Competitive applications will include letters of commitment from placement organizations to demonstrate capacity and willingness to host BridgeUSA scholars.

A.1. Recipient Responsibilities:

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

Oversee all aspects of BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund including, but not limited to recruitment, screening and selection of candidates, distribution of scholarship funds to

exchange visitors, placement of exchange visitors with pre-selected host organizations, providing pre-arrival and in-country orientations, monitoring of program exchange visitors, and measurement of program the effectiveness.

The obligations for administering training and internship programs are outlined in 22 CFR 62 Part 62.22.

Recipient Obligations of Training and Internship Programs

1) Award recipients designated by the Department to administer training and internship programs must:
(i) Ensure that trainees and interns are appropriately selected, placed, oriented, supervised, and evaluated;
(ii) Be available to trainees and interns (and host organizations, as appropriate) to assist as facilitators, counselors, and information resources;
(iii) Ensure that training and internship programs provide a balance between the trainees' and interns' learning opportunities and their contributions to the organizations in which they are placed;
(iv) Ensure that the training and internship programs are full-time (minimum of 32 hours a week); and
(v) Ensure that any host organizations and third parties involved in the recruitment, selection, screening, placement, orientation, performance monitoring and evaluation for, or the provision of training and internship programs are sufficiently educated on the goals, objectives, and regulations of the Exchange Visitor Program and adhere to all regulations set forth in this part as well as all additional terms and conditions governing Exchange Visitor Program administration that the Department may from time to time impose.

2) Award recipient must certify that they or any host organization acting on its behalf:
(i) Have sufficient resources, plant, equipment, and trained personnel available to provide the specified training and internship program;
(ii) Provide continuous on-site supervision and mentoring of trainees and interns by experienced and knowledgeable staff;
(iii) Ensure that trainees and interns obtain skills, knowledge, and competencies through structured and guided activities such as classroom training, seminars, rotation through several departments, on-the-job training, attendance at conferences, and similar learning activities, as appropriate in specific circumstances;
(iv) Conduct periodic evaluations of trainees and interns, as set forth in CFR 62.22(l);
(v) Do not displace full- or part-time or temporary or permanent American workers or serve to fill a labor need and ensure that the positions that trainees and interns fill exist primarily to assist trainees and interns in achieving the objectives of their participation in training and internship programs; and

3) Award recipients or any third parties acting on their behalf must complete thorough screening of potential trainees or interns, including a documented interview conducted by the recipient either in-person or by videoconferencing, or by telephone if videoconferencing is not a viable option.

(4) Sponsors must retain all documents referred to in CFR 62.22(f) for at least three years following the completion of all training and internship programs. Documents and any requisite signatures may be retained in either hard copy or electronic format.

Use of third parties -

1) ***Sponsors use of third parties.*** Award recipients may engage third parties (including, but not limited to host organizations, partners, local businesses, governmental entities, academic institutions, and other foreign or domestic agents) to assist them in the conduct of their designated training and internship programs. Such third parties must have an executed written agreement with the sponsor to act on behalf of the sponsor in the conduct of the sponsor's program. This agreement must outline the obligations and full relationship between the sponsor and third party on all matters involving the administration of their exchange visitor program. A sponsor's use of a third party does not relieve the sponsor of its obligations to comply with and to ensure third party compliance with Exchange Visitor Program regulations. Any failure by any third party to comply with the regulations set forth in this part or with any additional terms and conditions governing Exchange Visitor Program administration that the Department may from time to time impose will be imputed to the sponsors engaging such third party.

2) ***Screening and vetting third parties operating outside the United States.*** Sponsors must ascertain that third parties operating outside the United States are legitimate entities within the context of their home country environment. For third parties that operate as businesses, sponsors must obtain relevant home country documentation, such as a business registration or certification. Such home country documentation must include an English Language translation for any business registration or certification documents submitted in a foreign language. Written agreements between sponsors and third parties operating outside the United States must include annually updated price lists for training and internship programs offered by each third party and must indicate that such overseas third parties are sufficiently trained in all aspects of the programs they represent, including the regulations set forth in this part.

3) ***Screening and vetting host organizations.*** Sponsors must adequately screen all potential host organizations at which a trainee or intern will be placed by obtaining the following information:

(i) Employer Identification Number (EIN) used for tax purposes;

(ii) Third party verification of telephone number, address, and professional activities, e.g., via advertising, brochures, Web site, and/or feedback from prior participants; and

(iii) Verification of Worker's Compensation Insurance Policy or equivalent in each state or, if applicable, evidence of state exemption from requirement of coverage.

4) ***Site visits of host organizations.*** Sponsors must conduct site visits of host organizations that have not previously participated successfully in the sponsor's training and internship programs and that have fewer than 25 employees or less than three million dollars in annual revenue. Placements at academic institutions or at federal, state, or local government offices are specifically excluded from this requirement. The purpose of the site visits is for the sponsors to ensure that host organizations possess and maintain the ability and resources to provide structured and guided work-based learning experiences according to individualized T/IPPs and that host organizations understand and meet their obligations set forth in this part.

Host organization obligations. Sponsors/ Recipients must ensure that:
1) Host organizations sign a completed Form DS-7002 to verify that all placements are appropriate and consistent with the objectives of the trainees or interns as outlined in their program applications and as set forth in their T/IPPs. All parties involved in internship programs should recognize that interns are seeking entry-level training and experience. Accordingly, all placements must be tailored to the skills and experience level of the individual intern;

2) Host organizations notify sponsors promptly of any concerns about, changes in, or deviations from T/IPPs during training and internship programs and contact sponsors immediately in the event of any emergency involving trainees or interns;

3) Host organizations abide by all federal, state, and local occupational health and safety laws;

4) Host organizations abide by all program rules and regulations set forth by the sponsors, including the completion of all mandatory program performance monitoring and evaluation requirements.

Training/internship placement plan (Form DS-7002).
1) Sponsors/Recipients must fully complete and obtain all requisite signatures on a Form DS-7002 for each trainee or intern before issuing a Form DS-2019. Sponsors must provide each signatory an executed copy of the Form DS-7002. Upon request, trainees and interns must present their fully executed Form DS-7002 to Consular Officials during their visa interview.

2) To further distinguish between *bona fide* training for trainees or work-based learning for interns, which are permitted, and unskilled or casual labor positions which are not, all T/IPPs must:
(i) State the specific goals and objectives of the training and internship program (for each phase or component, if applicable);

(ii) Detail the knowledge, skills, or techniques to be imparted to the trainee or intern (for each phase or component, if applicable); and
(iii) Describe the methods of performance monitoring and evaluation and the supervision for each phase or component, if applicable.

3) A T/IPP for trainees must be divided into specific and various phases or components, and for each phase or component must:
(i) Describe the methodology of training and
(ii) Provide a chronology or syllabus.

4) A T/IPP for interns must:
(i) Describe the role of the intern in the organization and, if applicable, identify various departments or functional areas in which the intern will work; and
(ii) Identify the specific tasks and activities the intern will complete.

Program exclusions. Sponsors designated by the Department to administer training and internship programs must not:

1) Place trainees or interns in unskilled or casual labor positions, in positions that require or involve child care or elder care; or in clinical or any other kind of work that involves patient care or patient contact, including any work that would require trainees or interns to provide therapy, medication, or other clinical or medical care (e.g., sports or physical therapy, psychological counseling, nursing, dentistry, veterinary medicine, social work, speech therapy, early childhood education);

2) Place trainees or interns in positions, occupations, or businesses that could bring the Exchange Visitor Program or the Department into notoriety or disrepute; or

3) Engage or otherwise cooperate or contract with a Staffing/Employment Agency to recruit, screen, orient, place, evaluate, or train trainees or interns, or in any other way involve such agencies in an Exchange Visitor Program training and internship program.

4) Issue a T/IPP for any trainee or intern for which the duties involve more than 20 per cent clerical work.

Recruitment, Selection, and Placement:

- Establish a system for receiving candidate applications or nominations, review each application for technical eligibility, and manage review of each candidate for medical clearance;
- Create and maintain an up-to-date file on each selected exchange visitor;
- Follow up with participating U.S. embassies regarding applications, documents, and visa appointments, and respond to their inquiries, copying the appropriate program

officer in BridgeUSA;

- Review candidate applications and determine the best organization or college placement for each exchange visitor that will meet his/her academic and professional goals;
- Ensure that final placements establish diverse cohorts of exchange visitors at each host organization.
- Obtain approval of the relevant U.S. embassy Public Affairs Sections and BridgeUSA program office on final candidate lists.

Pre-departure Support and Programming:

- Prepare and distribute pre-departure materials for U.S. Embassies or local partners to use during their in-country pre-departure orientations and coordinate virtual participation of consortia and ECA representatives in these events;
- Prepare pre-departure materials for individual exchange visitors that describe program components, participation expectations, and preparation guidelines, and oversee the dissemination of these materials to exchange visitors through U.S. Embassies or in-country partners;
- Ensure that each exchange visitor signs a Terms and Conditions document (approved by ECA) and completes all other participation requirements and necessary pre-travel paperwork;
- Prepare and send Forms DS-2019 and DS-7002 (where applicable) as soon as possible after placement to facilitate the visa application and adjudication process and at least 60 days before departure;
- Notify the U.S. Embassies of each candidate's proposed U.S. arrival date and the date for sending travel itineraries for each exchange visitor;
- Arrange round-trip travel for the exchange visitors from their home cities to their U.S. host institutions that is compliant with the Fly America Act and send this itinerary along with general travel information to each exchange visitor and the respective U.S. Embassy;
- Coordinate pre-departure communication between award recipient and individual exchange visitors with pre-existing physical or mental health needs to facilitate pre-departure preparations and appropriate accommodations, as needed

Program Planning and Exchange Visitor Monitoring

- Arrange housing for each exchange visitor in conjunction with host organizations and share rules and regulations for housing with exchange visitors;
- Ensure that each exchange visitor receives an orientation upon arrival in the United States;
- Enroll exchange visitors in ECA's ASPE health benefits plan or alternative plan that meets J-1 visa requirements and is approved by ECA, advise exchange visitors about the benefits plan, and assist with claims as necessary;

- Monitor exchange visitors' adjustment, health and well-being, and program performance. Oversee the coordination and implementation of health and safety protocols and procedures between all individual host campuses and the administrative partner. Manage exchange visitor issues and emergencies at all times in coordination with BridgeUSA, and submit exchange visitor incident report forms, as needed, based on ECA policy guidelines;
- Assist exchange visitors in developing an individual development plan;
- Develop and facilitate programming that will increase exchange visitors' employability skills and assist them in applying for, obtaining, and participating in a professional training or continuing education directly related to the exchange visitors' professional background;
- Assist exchange visitors in contributing to service-learning opportunities and developing leadership skills;
- Develop and facilitate educational and cultural enrichment activities;
- Plan and implement at least one BridgeUSA STEM-program cultural exchange event that facilitates exchange visitor personal and professional development and helps exchange visitors maximize their BridgeUSA experiences;
- Assist exchange visitors in preparing for re-entry and transition upon return home;
- Manage and monitor the J-1 visa duration and SEVIS status of the exchange visitors;
- Manage financial aspects of the program where applicable including accident and sickness benefits, host university agreements, taxes, and other activity costs;
- Assume overall responsibility for complying with all applicable tax treaties and federal, state, and local laws on tax withholding and reporting for exchange visitors;

Alumni Programming and Ongoing Engagement

- Track and maintain updated lists of alumni and facilitate follow-on activities with alumni after they return home; and
- Plan and coordinate activities that would create opportunities for BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund-wide alumni engagement and amplify host organization alumni engagement efforts to strengthen both the program-specific brand and the BridgeUSA alumni network.

Additional Information:

All materials, publicity, and correspondence related to the program will acknowledge this as a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. The Bureau will retain copyright use of and be allowed to distribute materials related to this program as it sees fit.

What to Include in Your Proposal

Executive Summary. The Executive Summary should be one page in length, formatted in Times New Roman 12 with one-inch margins. The Executive Summary should include program title,

goals of the program, names of potential partner organizations responsible for project implementation, and proposed numbers of exchange visitors.

Background Information on Implementing/ Host Organizations. Information on proposed organizations and staff involved in the implementation of the project, including the mission, relevant expertise in conducting programs of a related nature, including on-going and planned activities not including the proposed project. If the applicant has received awards from ECA in the past, please list examples of relevant projects by office (e.g., Citizen Exchanges, International Visitors, Academic Exchanges, etc.), including project name, countries, year, and amount.

Roles and Responsibilities. A clear delineation of proposed roles and responsibilities for the potential award recipient and sub-recipient(s) in terms of project logistics, management, resources, and oversight.

Support of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. A description on how ECA's policy on Support of Diversity will be integrated into all aspects of the program, including but not limited to program materials and training methodology. Please refer to guidance in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) and under section D.9. "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) and Freedom and Democracy Guidelines."

Budget. Please refer to section D.14.a. in this document for allowable costs and the PSI for guidance on formatting your budget.

Acknowledging ECA's Financial Support. An acknowledgment to follow guidance in the PSI entitled "Acknowledgment of ECA's Financial Support and Use of the Department Seal." Proposals should also indicate agreement to use the "BridgeUSA" logo in all relevant program materials, applications, websites, and other related materials.

Resumes. Resumes of principal staff of all partner/host organizations involved in the implementation of the program should be included. Resumes should be no more than two pages in length.

Letters of Commitment and/or Letters of Support. Letters of commitment or support from partner organizations/partner institutions that demonstrate a capacity to arrange and conduct U.S. and overseas activities should also be included.

Unsolicited Documents. Attachments that do not directly address the proposed project (i.e., organization brochures, pamphlets, unsolicited reports) are strongly discouraged.

A.2. Substantial Involvement: In a cooperative agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. BridgeUSA's activities and responsibilities for the FY 2023 BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund are as follows:

1) Liaising with relevant U.S. Embassies and country desk officer(s) at the U.S. Department of State, specifically in terms of recruitment and selection efforts;
2) Assisting with connecting program alumni with relevant U.S. Embassy and BridgeUSA Alumni Network;
3) Assisting in arrangements for the debriefing session with Department of State and Public Affairs Sections (PASs) at U.S. embassies/consulates overseas;
4) Coordinating with the award recipient to publicize the program through various media outlets and social media platforms of ECA and Public Affairs Sections (PASs) at U.S. embassies/consulates overseas.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A1. Substantial Involvement under A. Program Description.
Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2023
Approximate Total Funding: $360,000. pending the availability of FY 2023 funds.
Approximate Number of Awards: One.
Approximate Average Award: $360,000, pending the availability of FY 2023 funds.
Minimum "Floor" of Award: $360,000, pending the availability of FY 2023 funds.
Maximum "Ceiling" of Award: $360,000, pending the availability of FY 2023 funds.
Anticipated Award Date: August 1, 2023, pending the availability of FY 2023 funds.
Anticipated Project Completion Date: August 1, 2026.
Additional Information:

The Department reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets and exchange visitor numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

C.1. Eligible Applicants
U.S. public and private academic and cultural institutions, exchange-of-persons, and other not-for-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit applications for this competition. Applicants must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

All applicants must also have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and be registered in SAM.gov (see additional information about this requirement in D.3. and D.5. below).

C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements

The following additional eligibility requirements apply to this NOFO announcement:

a.) ECA's grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to $130,000 in ECA funding. ECA anticipates making one cooperative agreement, in an amount of $360,000, to support all costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

b.) All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, POGI (if applicable), and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI); non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

c.) 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.

U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) that represent consortia or other combinations of accredited U.S. colleges/universities may submit one proposal to cooperate with ECA under this competition.

U.S. institutions with J-1/ EVP designations in academic categories including the College/ University Student, Intern, Research Scholar, and Trainee categories, may submit proposals. Applicants should have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with thematic or in-country partners or entities, and relevant stakeholders, including academia, private sector partners and NGOs, and have demonstrable experience in administering successful and preferably similar projects.

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 Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

C.2.1 Eligible Countries: Under this NOFO, a single award will be issued for participating countries in the following regions:

AF: Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia. **Approximately 7-10 participants across the region.**

EAP: Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. **Approximately 7-10 participants across the region.**

WHA: Bahamas, Barbados, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Trinidad and Tobago. **Approximately 7-10 participants across the region.**

ECA reserves the right to add or remove eligible countries and/or regions prior to the issuance of the award. The proposal must demonstrate the applicant's flexibility to work with ECA and demonstrate the interest and ability to deliver customized experiences. No invitations to participate in the BridgeUSA Global STEM Scholarship Fund may be issued without U.S. Department of State approval.

The award recipient must detail recruitment plans for all three regions but does not need to recruit candidates from every eligible country. Competitive proposals will demonstrate capacity and planning to recruit as widely as possible and balance exchange visitor selection as evenly as possible across the three regions.

Exchange Visitor Program J-1 Category Eligible Program Descriptions:

The award recipient may choose to recruit from any eligible category or combination of eligible categories detailed below. The four eligible categories are:

College/University Student Category: Exchange visitors in this category must be pursuing a full course of study at accredited post-secondary educational institutions in the United States. Academic Training is permitted if approved by the sponsor, but study must be the primary purpose of the exchange visitors program in the U.S. Students are eligible for participation when they are not substantially supported by personal funds. The duration of participation in this category is:

1) **Degree Students:** Eligible for participation if they are studying at the post-secondary accredited academic institution, pursuing a full course of study, maintaining satisfactory advancement toward completion of academic program, or participating in an authorized academic training program as permitted. For the purposes of this award, the maximum duration of the program shall not exceed three years.
2) **Non-Degree Students**: Eligible for participation up to 24 months with the same criteria as degree students listed above (per 22 CFR 62.23(e)(4))

3) **Student Intern:** Participation in this new subcategory is open to foreign students enrolled and pursuing full-time studies at a post-secondary educational institution outside the United States. Student interns may participate in a student internship program for up to 12 months at each degree level. Selection criteria for the new student intern subcategory must include the following requirements and follow 22 CFR 62.23(h)(3).
    a. The student must be accepted to participate in an internship by the post-secondary educational institution listed as the sponsor on his or her DS-2019 and is primarily in the United States to engage in a student internship program.
    b. The student must be in good academic standing with the post-secondary educational institution abroad after completion of the student internship program which is required to fulfill a degree requirement.

Intern: This category is for exchange visitors in a structured guided work-based internship program in his or her specific academic field and who either 1) is currently enrolled fulltime in and actively pursuing studies at a foreign ministerial-recognized degree or certificate-granted post-secondary academic institution outside the United States **or** 2) graduated from such an institution no more than 12 months prior to the program start date reflected on Form DS-2019. In addition, a specific objective of the new internship program is to provide exchange visitor interns a period of work-based learning, allowing them to develop practical skills that will enhance their future careers. Bridging the gap between formal education and practical work experience and gaining substantive cross-cultural experience helps visitors in this category build partnerships, promote mutual understanding, and develop networks for relationships that will last through generations as these foreign nationals move into leadership roles in a broad range of occupational fields in their own societies.

Research Scholar: Research scholars primarily conduct research, observe, or consult in connection with a research project at research institutions, corporate research facilities, museums, libraries, accredited post-secondary educational institutions, or similar types of institutions. The research scholar may also teach and lecture – unless disallowed by the sponsor – provided that these activities are incidental and do not extend the period of participation in this category. An Out of Country record can be created in SEVIS after validation to identify a research scholar exchange visitor continuing program activity outside the United States.

Trainee: This category is for exchange visitors participating in a structured and guided work-based training program in his or her specific occupational field (in an occupational category for which a sponsor has obtained designation) who has either: 1) a degree or professional certificate from a foreign ministerially-recognized post-secondary academic institution and at least one year of prior related work experience in his or her occupational field acquired outside the United States; or 2) five years of work experience in his or her occupational field acquired outside the United States. Participation in this program is meant to enhance the skills or expertise of the exchange visitor in his or her occupational field at a U.S. business while also

allowing the individual to gain exposure to U.S. culture. Trainees cannot work in unskilled or casual labor positions, in positions that require or involve childcare or elder care, or in any kind of position that involves patient care or contact.

C.3. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds

There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this competition. However, 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.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

D.1. Solicitation Package Location

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the ECA's website at https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding or from the Grants.gov website at https://www.grants.gov.

D.2. Content and Form of Submission

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which consists of required application forms and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.16. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

D.3. Unique Entity Identifier Number

You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access http://www.dnb.com or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (Data Universal Numbering System or DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package. For more

detailed instructions for obtaining a UEI (DUNS) number, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html

D.4. Required Proposal Elements

All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative, budget, and budget narrative.

D.5. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM)

All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.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 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. Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html

D.6. Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)

Prior to making a Federal Assistance award over $250,000, the Federal agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in FAPIIS (see 41 U.S.C. 2313) and accessible through SAM.gov. If an Applicant is currently in FAPIIS, they can comment on any information about its organization that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in FAPIIS, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

D.7. Required Registration with SAMS Domestic

All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic by accessing https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com and clicking the "create an account" link. SAMS Domestic 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 SAMS Domestic 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/.

In the event the ILMS Help Desk is unable to provide you with assistance in a timely manner, please contact ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov and copy the program officer associated with the solicitation.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

D.8. Adherence To All Regulations Governing The J Visa

ECA places critically important emphases 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 EVP as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program exchange visitors, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to exchange visitors, monitoring of exchange visitors, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The award recipient will be responsible for issuing Forms DS-2019 to exchange visitors 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
Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.9. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) and Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to ECA's authorizing legislation, “Diversity” should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, geographic location, education, income, socio-economic status, and other diversity dimensions, that may hinder

inclusion. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. Programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. Please refer to the "Support of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility" review criterion of this document for more information on how this will be reviewed as a part of any application. Please also refer to the "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility" section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating DEIA into the proposal.

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," ECA "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.

D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

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

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

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

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

- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
    - Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities
        - E1.1.04: Percent of participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government
        - E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program
        - E1.1.10: Percent of foreign participants who traveled to the United States for the first time during their program
        - recommend the United States as a good place to study
        - E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American People
        - E1.1.18: Percent of participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values
        - E1.1.19: Percent of participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries
    - 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
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
        - E3.0.02: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of Americans
        - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program exchange visitor
- 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
    - E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts
    - E4.1.03: Number of ECA-supported international scholarships provided
    - E4.1.04: Number of professional placements
- Objective 6: Increase capacity of ECA partner institutions to achieve program strategic goals
- Sub-Objective 6.1: Increase capacity of implementing partners and educational institutions for the internationalization of programs
    - E6.1.02: Number of exchange participants from or hosted by Minority-Serving Institutions participating in ECA (both funded and private sector) exchanges (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 exchange visitor surveys

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

- Objectives. Programmatic objectives are statements of the condition(s) that state what the program is designed to achieve. Objectives are therefore bound by the resources and timeframe of the program and must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART; see the ECA Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Innovation (MELI) Unit's pages on the ECA website for more information: https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-evaluation-division/capacity-building). In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the

MODE Framework, the Functional Bureau Strategy (https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau), or other applicant-designed program-specific objectives.

- Indicators. Performance indicators are measures used to gauge progress toward programmatic objectives and sub-objectives. Indicators should be as specific as possible (following the SMART principles) and include any proposed disaggregations (meaning, breakdowns of the data by subgroups, such as gender or country; 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 exchange visitor 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 exchange visitors at one, three, five, and 10 years after the exchange has ended to capture the long-term impact 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.

Award recipients will be required to submit an upload of the raw data (in CSV format) along with the State Assistance Management System Domestic (SAMS-D RPM) reporting (see below). 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 exchange visitors/survey respondents.

Program Performance M&E Narrative

The applicant should include information within the program narrative section(s) of the proposal 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 exchange visitors – detailing strategies to ensure adequate survey response rates (https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/eca_eval_division_survey_response_rates.pdf), and to reduce selection and non-response bias.
- A brief explanation of data analysis and reporting procedures.
- An overview of a proposed learning plan and feedback loops to ensure that the Grant Officer (GO)/Grant Officer Representative (GOR) are informed on performance monitoring issues at regular intervals.

SAMS-D RPM Reporting Requirements

The SAMS-D 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 SAMS-D 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 SAMS-D RPM. The data stored in the SAMS-D 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.

D.11. Virtual Exchange Component

When changing political, health, environmental, or other similar circumstances require a suspension or halt of in-person activities and where ECA determines that a virtual alternative is appropriate and viable, award recipients should demonstrate the ability and capacity to transition from in-person to virtual exchanges. Proposals should demonstrate the organization's capacity to provide innovative options for virtual activities to substitute for in-person engagement for program exchange visitors. Organizations should consider how they will implement virtual exchange activities, given the potential limits to internet access from exchange visitors in some locations and while continuing to advance foreign policy objectives and achieve lasting benefits for U.S. citizens and international exchange visitors.

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.

D.12. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients

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

D. 13. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial

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

D.14. Budget Format

Applicants must submit SF-424A – "Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs" along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget, a detailed budget, and a budget narrative. 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.

D.14.a. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

1) Travel: International and domestic airfare; airline baggage and seat fees; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs for exchange visitors. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act.

2) Overhead Costs. Costs necessary for the effective administration of the project may include salaries for employees, benefits, mailing Form DS-2019, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the PSI. Proposals should show strong overhead cost sharing contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner and other sources. Award recipient staff travel should NOT be included in the exchange visitor numbers.

3) SEVIS/ I-901 Fees. This is a one-time fee for persons applying for J-1 visas. The fee covers the costs of administering the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (***SEVIS***) and related enforcement efforts. Only principal J-1 applicants must pay the ***SEVIS*** I-901 fee.

4) J-1 Visa Fees. All program exchange visitors/applicants must pay the machine-readable visa (MRV) fee to obtain a visa interview appointment. The fee will be paid out of the scholarship funding as disbursed by the award recipient.

5) Healthcare Benefits Coverage. Enroll exchange visitors in ECA's ASPE health benefits plan or alternative plan that meets J-1 visa requirements and is approved by ECA,

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

D.15. 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, and brief biographical sketches of key personnel to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions, VI. Recipient Responsibility and Compliance with Federal Requirements (link to: https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/).

D.16. Application Deadline and Method of Submission

Application Deadline Date: Wednesday, May 10, 2023

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.

D.17. Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures

Eligible organizations should follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html).

D.17.a. 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/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

D.17.b. How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov
For access to complete instruction on how to apply for NOFOs on Grants.gov, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html

D.17.c. 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

D.17.d. Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission
Applicants have until 11:59 p.m., Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after the application deadline date and time will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system and will be found technically ineligible.

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

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant 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, such as dial-up connections, 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 Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal 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.

D.18. Intergovernmental Review of Applications
Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1. Review Process
ECA will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to ECA grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the ECA's Grants Officer.

E.2. Review Criteria

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

1. Quality of the program idea: Proposals should be responsive to the program framework and policy objectives identified in the NOFO, appropriate in the country/regional context, and should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to ECA's mission of promoting mutual understanding and relations among nations. Proposals should have the potential to have an immediate impact and beyond. For example, a strong sustainability plan may include demonstrating continuing impact beyond the life of a program or garnering other donor support after ECA funding ceases. Also, proposals that promote creative approaches to recognized ongoing challenges are highly encouraged.

2. Program planning and Ability to achieve program objectives: A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. The agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. The objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. Competitive proposals will include a clear articulation of how the proposed project activities contribute to the overall project objectives, and each activity will be clearly developed and detailed. A comprehensive monthly work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and the logistical capacity of the organization. Objectives should be ambitious yet measurable, results-focused and achievable in a reasonable timeframe. For example, a competitive application should include a Logic Model to demonstrate how the program activities will have an impact on its proposed objectives. The Logic Model should match the objectives, outcomes, key activities, and outputs described in the narrative. Applications should address how the project will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners have been identified, ECA strongly encourages applicants to submit letters of support from proposed in-country partners. Additionally, applicants should describe the division of labor among the direct applicant and any local partners. If applicable, applications should identify participant J-1 categories or selection criteria for participants, and the specific roles of sub-awardees, among other pertinent details.

3. Support of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA): Proposals should show substantive support of ECA's policy on Diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how DEIA will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and program design, content, and implementation, including individual participant recruitment, selection, and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated DEIA plan and not simply express general support for the concept of DEIA. Proposals should demonstrate how DEIA will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. Applicants should describe how programming will impact all its beneficiaries, including support for underserved and underrepresented communities. This approach should be an integral part of both the concept and explicit design, and implementation of all proposed program activities, objectives, and monitoring. Strong proposals will provide specific analysis, measures, and corresponding targets as appropriate. Applicants shall identify the difference between opportunities and barriers to access, and design programs accordingly to not perpetuate these inequalities but rather enhance programmatic impact by including all people in society.

4. Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability: Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. Proposals 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 ECA's Grants Division. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the programs' objectives. Program proposals should have potential for continued funding beyond ECA resources.

5. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): Proposals should include a fully developed performance M&E narrative and a PMP (or similar document) that includes the goals, objectives, and indicators used. Proposals will be evaluated for feasibility and alignment with the M&E section of this solicitation, including if: 1) M&E resources, monitoring mechanisms, and data analysis and reporting procedures are sufficiently detailed and realistic; 2) a realistic learning plan provides a strategy to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices in conjunction with the Grant Officer/GOR; and 3) a PMP (or other document that includes similar information) is complete, clear, and well-organized. All submitted PMPs and M&E narrative sections will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided information on the minimum data required as per the solicitation.

6. Cost-effectiveness and Cost-sharing: The overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions. Inclusion of cost-sharing in the budget does not result in additional points awarded during the review process. Budgets should have low and/or reasonable overhead and administration costs, and applicants should provide clear explanations and justifications for these costs in relation to the work involved. All budget items should be clearly explained and justified to demonstrate necessity, appropriateness, and connection to the program objectives.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

F.1. 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 the 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 an authorized Grants Officer and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer as identified in the application.

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.

F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Terms and Conditions applicable to all ECA agreements include:

- 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.
- U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions.

For a copy of the OMB Guidance cited, please download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

For a copy of the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, or to review other Department of State assistance information, please download from: https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/

F.3. Reporting Requirements

All reports must be submitted in a timely manner. You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

1.) Performance Progress Reports (PPRs) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual reports shall be due 120 calendar days after the cooperative agreement year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer.) The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic.

2.) The Federal Financial Report (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: http://www.dpm.psc.gov/. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to SAMS Domestic, in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Cooperative Agreements/Grants.

   In the event you are having difficulty uploading reports and the ILMS help desk is not providing sufficient assistance, please email ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov.

3.) A final program and financial report no more than 120 days after the expiration or

termination of the award.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their performance monitoring and evaluation findings to ECA in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) information.)

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to ECA upon request.

F.4. Program Data Requirements: Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program exchange visitors and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with ECA as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.

2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three workdays prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Elizabeth Ongao, ongaoe@state.gov and David Benze, benzedk@state.gov, U.S. Department of State, BridgeUSA, ECA/EC, 2200 C St, NW, Washington, DC 20037, or by telephone, 202-304-8369 or 202-676-7895.

All correspondence with ECA concerning this NOFO 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 NOFO deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Notice

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any ECA representative. Explanatory information provided by ECA that contradicts published language will not be binding. 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. Awards will be subject to periodic programmatic and financial reporting and performance monitoring and evaluation requirements as outlined in the NOFO.

Scott Weinhold March 7, 2023
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State