

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. EMBASSY SOFIA, PUBLIC DIPLOMACY SECTION
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Funding Opportunity Title:	U.S. Embassy Sofia PDS Annual Program Statement
Funding Opportunity Number:	PDS-APS-FY24-01-SOFIA
Deadline for Applications:	Rolling Deadlines (see details below)
CFDA Number:	19.040 – Public Diplomacy Programs
Total Amount Available:	\$300,000; pending funds availability
Maximum for Each Award:	\$25,000.00

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Embassy Sofia Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) of the U.S. Department of State is pleased to announce that funding is available through its Public Diplomacy Small Grants Program. This is an Annual Program Statement, outlining our funding priorities, the strategic themes we focus on, and the procedures for submitting requests for funding. Please carefully follow all instructions below.

Purpose of Small Grants: PDS Sofia invites proposals for programs that **bolster the people-to-people ties** between the United States and Bulgaria through cultural and exchange programming **that highlights shared values and promotes bilateral cooperation**. All programs must include an American cultural element, or connection with American expert/s, organization/s, or institution/s in a specific field that will promote increased understanding of U.S. policy and perspectives and promote shared values.

Competitive proposals should focus on one or more of the following priority themes:

- Promote leadership skills, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, and innovation among secondary and university students.
- Deepen the social, cultural, and educational connections between the United States and Bulgaria, especially through the development of active, sustainable alumni networks.
- Boost public understanding of and support for Bulgaria's role as a strong NATO Ally as it celebrates its 20th year in the Alliance.
- Develop youth skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM), especially focused on assisting youth from underserved, vulnerable, or rural communities (outside major metropolitan areas).
- Strengthen the development of robust independent media and civil society organizations to bolster civic participation and improve societal trust in democratic institutions.
- Increase media and digital literacy and improve Bulgarian society's resilience to disinformation.

- Advance the inclusion and integration of historically underserved and vulnerable communities, including women, Roma and other minority groups, LGBTQI+ individuals, Ukrainian refugees, other migrants, and disadvantaged youth.
- Increase interconnectivity between Bulgaria and other countries in the region, including joint projects that foster cooperation between the citizens of Bulgaria and North Macedonia.
- Promote dialogue and civic participation in programs that confront climate change and that advance environmental sustainability and energy diversification.

Participants and Audiences: Audiences, which will vary by program and focus, include but are not limited to: students (particularly at secondary and university levels), academics and think-tanks, government officials (at all levels), journalists and media professionals, entrepreneurs, artists, musicians, and various underserved or vulnerable populations.

While not required, **the most competitive proposals will include components that reach audiences outside of Sofia, in regions with less exposure to the United States**, including Northwest and Southeast Bulgaria and the Black Sea coast.

Grantees are also encouraged to host programming and take advantage of existing resources at American Corners in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, and Burgas, especially when programming involves youth (secondary/university) audiences.

The following types of programs are not eligible for funding:

- Programs relating to partisan political activity;
- Charitable activities;
- Construction programs;
- Programs that support specific religious activities;
- Fundraising campaigns;
- Lobbying for specific legislation or programs;
- Scientific research;
- Programs intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the organization;
- Programs that duplicate existing programs; or
- For-profit programs.

Authorizing legislation, type and year of funding: Funding authority rests in the Smith-Mundt Act and the Fulbright-Hays Act. The source of funding is Fiscal Year 2024 Public Diplomacy Funding.

Deadlines and Funding Decisions: Proposals will be evaluated according to the following rolling deadlines: **Proposals are due no later than 5:00 p.m. Sofia time on December 29, March 29, and August 2.** Grant panels will meet in January, April, and August to consider submitted

proposals. No exceptions will be given for late or incomplete proposals. *Note: see Submission Dates and Times in Part D below for more specific information.*

Priority will be given to applicants who submit proposals earlier in the fiscal year. *Note: available funding may be exhausted before the scheduled August review if there are enough qualified proposals already recommended for funding.*

Whenever possible, applicants should submit proposals for projects at least 2-3 months prior to anticipated program start dates. *PDS Sofia is unable to approve/fund proposals that are submitted last minute and are slated to begin 1-1.5 months after they are submitted.*

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: 1-12 months

Number of awards anticipated: 10-15 awards (dependent on amounts)

Award amounts: award amount may range from a minimum of \$500 to a maximum of \$25,000

Total available funding: anticipated \$300,000 pending confirmation of funds availability

Type of Funding: Fiscal Year 2024 Public Diplomacy Funding

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Grants, Fixed Amount Awards (FAA), or Cooperative Agreements.

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should preferably be completed in 12 months or less.

PDS Sofia will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants

The Public Diplomacy Section encourages applications from Bulgarian, European or, U.S.-based organizations and individuals with proven experience of executing programs. Proposals that demonstrate the long-term sustainability of the proposed project will receive priority. Organizations may include:

- Registered not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations with programming experience
- Individuals

- Non-profit or governmental educational institutions
- Governmental institutions

For-profit or commercial entities are not eligible to apply.

Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing is not required.

Other Eligibility Requirements

Applicants are encouraged to only submit one application per priority program area in a given funding cycle.

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Content and Form of Application Submission

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Content of Application

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars
- All pages are numbered
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12-point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

The following documents are **REQUIRED**:

1. Mandatory application forms

Note: links to exact forms below may change as they are updated so please check the higher-level websites for organizations/individuals if the links do not work.

For Organizations: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-mandatory-family>

- **SF-424** (Application for Federal Assistance for organizations)
- **SF-424A** (*Budget Information for Non-Construction programs*)

For Individuals: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-individual-family>
SF-424-I Application for Federal Assistance - Individual

- **SF-424B** (*Assurances for Non-Construction programs*) (*note: the SF-424B is only required for individuals and for organizations not registered in SAM.gov*)

Note: When accessing the website it may take some time for the list of forms to appear. If necessary, please try another browser. Please ignore the “warning status” at the top of the website. That is meant for domestic grant applicants in the United States. These forms are still applicable to partners outside the United States.

Please note that in order to be able to view and fill in the required forms, you need to download these PDF files onto your computer, right-click the document and select Open with Adobe. If you still get a message “The document you are trying to load requires Adobe Reader 8 or higher”, then select “Enable all features” in the upper right-hand corner of the screen.

2. Summary Page: Cover sheet stating the applicant name and organization, proposal date, program title, program period proposed start and end date, and brief purpose of the program.

3. Proposal (10 pages maximum): The proposal should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

- **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Introduction to the Organization or Individual applying:** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program, including information on all previous grants from the U.S. Embassy and/or U.S. government agencies.
- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise, and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed.
- **Program Goals and Objectives:** The “goals” describe what the program is intended to achieve. What aspect of the relationship between the United States and Bulgaria will be improved? The “objectives” refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be specific, achievable, and measurable. Describe the target audiences.
- **Program Activities:** Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Program Methods and Design:** A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal.
- **Proposed Program Schedule:** The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **Key Personnel:** Names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. What proportion of their time will be used in support of this program?

- **Program Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees.
- **Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** This is an important part of successful grants. Throughout the timeframe of the grant, how will the activities be monitored to ensure they are happening in a timely manner, and how will the program be evaluated to make sure it is meeting the goals of the grant?
- **Future Funding or Sustainability:** Applicant's plan for continuing the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable.

4. Budget Justification Narrative: After filling out the SF-424A Budget (above), use a separate sheet of paper or excel spreadsheet to describe each of the budget expenses in detail. See section *H. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions* below for further information.

5. Suggested Attachments

- 1-page CV or resume of key personnel who are proposed for the program
- Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner
- Official permission letters, if required for program activities
- Verification of the non-profit registration
- Unique Entity Identifier and active registration in SAM.gov

Required Registrations:

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) **as well as** an active registration with the SAM.gov. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards.

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

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

- Organizations based in the United States or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- Organizations based outside of the United States and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.

- Please note that as of November 2022 and February 2022 respectively, organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code or CAGE code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoD in addition to Department of State should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/Codification/CageTool/home>

Exemptions

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if:

- An applicant's identity must be protected due to potential endangerment of their mission, their organization's status, their employees, or individuals being served by the applicant.
- For an applicant, if the Federal awarding agency makes a determination that there are exigent circumstances that prohibit the applicant from receiving a unique entity identifier and completing SAM registration prior to receiving a Federal award. In these instances, Federal awarding agencies must require the recipient to obtain a unique entity identifier and complete SAM registration within 30 days of the Federal award date.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

Submission Dates and Times

PDS Sofia will accept proposals throughout the year and will review proposals according to the following schedule:

Proposals received before December 29 will be reviewed by *January 19, with responses going out by January 26.*

Proposals received between December 30 and March 29 will be reviewed by *April 19, with responses going out by April 26.*

Proposals received between March 30 and August 2 will be reviewed by *August 23, with responses going out by August 30.*

Programs should plan to commence no earlier than one month after review panels meet. For example, for proposals submitted by December 29 and reviewed by the January grants panel, programs should not plan to commence earlier than February 16th, etc. Applicants are encouraged to indicate if project start dates are flexible.

Funding Restrictions

Funding cannot be spent for political purpose or support actions that are contradictory to the official position of the State Department.

Award funds cannot be used for construction and real property acquisitions, vehicle purchases, alcohol, etc. A non-exhaustive list of prohibited costs includes the following:

Costs of entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and social activities and any associated costs are unallowable, except where specific costs that might otherwise be considered entertainment have a programmatic purpose and are authorized either in the approved budget for the Federal award or with prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency.

Costs of organized fund raising, including financial campaigns, endowment drives, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions are unallowable.

Costs of goods or services for personal use of the non-Federal entity's employees are unallowable regardless of whether the cost is reported as taxable income to the employees.

Costs for advertising and public relations, except when solely for program outreach and other specific purposes necessary to meet the requirements of the Federal award.

Costs incurred by advisory councils or committees are unallowable.

Fines, penalties, damages and other settlements.

Costs of alcoholic beverages are unallowable.

Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted by email to SofiaGrants@state.gov
Please do not/not submit forms electronically through www.Grants.gov.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below. The criteria listed are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of an application.

Organizational capacity and record on previous grants: The organization has expertise in its stated field and PDS is confident of its ability to undertake the program. This includes a financial management system and a bank account.

Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea – The program idea is well developed, with detail about how program activities will be carried out. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline.

Goals and objectives: Goals and objectives are clearly stated and program approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results.

Embassy priorities: Applicant has clearly described how stated goals are related to and support U.S. Embassy Sofia's priority areas or target audiences.

Budget: The budget justification is detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities.

Monitoring and evaluation plan: Applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provide milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes output and outcome indicators, and shows how and when those will be measured.

Sustainability: Program activities will continue to have positive impact after the end of the program.

Review and Selection Process: A Grants Review Committee will evaluate all eligible applications.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Federal Award Notices

The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Payment Method: Payments will be made in at least two installments, as needed to carry out the program activities.

Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified via email.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Terms and Conditions: Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include: 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 600, Certifications and Assurances, and the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, all of which are available at: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>. Note the U.S Flag branding and marking requirements in the Standard Terms and Conditions.

Reporting

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit program and financial reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact PDS at: SofiaGrants@state.gov.

Note: We do not provide any pre-consultation for application related questions that are addressed in the NOFO. Once an application has been submitted, State Department officials

and staff — both in the Department and at embassies overseas — may not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process is completed.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Personnel: Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the program, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the program.

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program. If the program involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

Equipment: Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property that is required for the program, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least \$5,000 per unit.

Supplies: List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the program. If an item costs more than \$5,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

Contractual: Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also describe any sub-awards to non-profit partners that may help carry out the program activities.

Other Direct Costs: Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All “Other” or “Miscellaneous” expenses must be itemized and explained.

Indirect Costs: These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of 10% of the **modified total direct costs** as defined in [2 CFR 200.68](#).

“Cost Sharing” refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers’ time and donated venues.

Alcoholic Beverages: Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.