

PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

FY 2026 Sports Visitor Program

Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0018011

Office of Sports Diplomacy

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued by the Office of Sports Diplomacy for the FY 2026 Sports Visitor Program. Proposals must conform to the solicitation, the guidelines in this document, and the standard Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Any application not adhering to these conditions may be deemed technically ineligible.

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

I. STATEMENT OF WORK

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) is supporting the participation of American and international youth athletes and adult coaches/chaperones in thematic sports-based exchanges to develop leadership skills, build lasting bilateral relationships, and examine the positive impact of U.S. legislation on sports and society.

Recipient Responsibilities:

The recipient organization will be responsible for the following, in close consultation with ECA and U.S. embassies and consulates, as appropriate:

1. Participant Recruitment, Review, and Selection – Proposals must include a

detailed description of the proposed plans/processes to accomplish all elements outlined below, as well as a sample application form in the appendices.

- a. Application – Develop an online application form for merit-based open competition for American youth and coaches/chaperones. The ECA Program Office must approve the application form prior to it going live. Additionally, the application form and subsequent program applicant data must be housed on a secure, private, password protected platform or website that is accessible only to the award recipient and the ECA Program Office. The award recipient should prepare an identical paper-based version of the application for those program applicants who have limited internet access;
- b. Promotion and Recruitment – Develop a strategic outreach plan and timeline to promote the opportunity and manage all aspects of an open, competitive, merit-based recruitment;
- c. Review - Conduct a transparent review process, with consistent and clearly defined scoring criteria for all applicants; and
- d. Selection - Provide ECA Program Office with final list of U.S. citizen participants with short biographies for approval by agreed upon deadline (determined after the award has been made).

2. Preparation

- a. Develop pre-departure orientation (PDO) materials and detailed program schedules for each program well ahead of program start date, conducting virtual or in-person PDOs for participants, coaches/chaperones, parents, and Public Diplomacy Sections, as appropriate;
- b. Develop educational and programming materials including (but not limited to) pre- and post-program virtual thematic sessions and a thematic-based curriculum;
- c. Arrange for all logistical and administrative components for participants such as airport pick-up and drop-off, ground transportation during the program, medical treatment, meals, and the disbursement of program funds;
- d. Arrange housing for the participants in a dormitory, hotel, homestay,

- or some combination thereof and ensure appropriate staffing to monitor the housing arrangement throughout the exchange;
- e. *If* housing participants in a homestay: carefully recruit, screen, and select local host families to offer a minimum of one weekend homestays (lodging and meals). Criminal background checks, including a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry, must be conducted for members of host families (and others living in the home) who are 18 years or older;
 - f. Monitor housing arrangements to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of participants;
 - g. Design and regularly review comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures to protect the health, safety, and well-being of all program participants;
 - h. Issue participant DS-2019 forms for U.S.-based exchange foreign participants and make necessary pre-departure travel arrangements including passport and foreign visa assistance, immunizations, and other arrangements as needed for international-based exchange American participants;
 - i. Enroll U.S.-based exchange foreign participants and international-based exchange American participants in the Bureau's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) health benefit program for the duration of the exchanges, issue health benefit identification cards for each participant, and assist with claims as necessary. The ECA Program Office will instruct the award recipient how to access informational brochures and claim forms;
 - j. Either ensure pre-existing health benefit coverage or secure health benefit coverage for U.S.-based exchange American participants, and if applicable, for international youth and chaperone(s) participating in a custom sport camp during international-based exchanges, as they are not covered by the Bureau's ASPE plan, that meets requirements outlined in 22 CFR 62.14;
 - k. Prepare emergency contact information cards and distribute cards to all participants prior to traveling;
 - l. Secure professional interpreters as necessary for exchanges as outlined in the solicitation;

- m. Collect medical documentation to ensure that each participant meets medical and health standards and has required immunizations for travel;
- n. Manage/arrange all round-trip international travel arrangements (complying with the Fly America Act) for U.S. based exchange foreign participants and international-based exchange American participants;
- o. Manage/arrange within-country travel for all participants during the exchange, and if applicable, for international youth and chaperone(s) participating in a custom sport camp during international-based exchanges;
- p. Hire and train staff, as needed, and assign an appropriate number of staff to accompany participants for each exchange, including one staff person on each sub-award recipient-led international-based exchange, to ensure participant health and safety and that each exchange is pedagogically enriching and in line with U.S. foreign policy goals. Criminal background checks, including a search of the U.S. Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry, must be conducted for all program staff; and
- q. Orient staff and those participating from the U.S. host communities, including host families (if applicable), to the goals of the program and to the cultures and sensitivities of the exchange visitors.

3. Exchange Activities

- a. Design, plan, and implement substantive exchanges designed to achieve the goals outlined in the NOFO. Exchanges must integrate with an existing youth sports camp and/or outline the creation of a customized youth sports camp and generate meaningful and consistent exposure between participants and host-country peers;
- b. Develop, and implement, a comprehensive plan to monitor the participants' safety and well-being during the exchange;
- c. Conduct a welcome orientation for participants upon their arrival in the host-country to review program goals, objectives, and expectations. For U.S.-based exchanges, welcome orientations should be held jointly with competitively selected American participants;
- d. Arrange appropriate community, cultural, social, and civic activities;

- e. Engage participants in at least one facilitated community service activity during the exchange. The program should provide context for the participants – identifying community needs, volunteerism, charitable giving, etc. – and a debriefing so that the service activity is not an isolated event and will help participants apply the experience at home;
 - f. Plan, oversee, implement, and/or sub-contract for concurrent and relevant programming for the coaches/chaperones during the exchanges;
 - g. Make appropriate accommodations and arrangements for participants' religious observances and dietary restrictions, as needed (e.g., allotting time for prayer or services, providing halal meals, etc.);
 - h. Send the ECA Program Office two weekly email reports including, but not limited to, program updates, highlights, lowlights, and/or any changes to the program schedule during each exchange;
 - i. Inform and consult with the ECA Program Office about any program or participant problems, emergencies, or other issues as well as the progress of necessary corrective action; and
 - j. Provide a closing session to summarize exchange activities, prepare participants for their return home, and present opportunities for alumnae engagement.
4. Follow-on Activities
- a. Support participants in the development and implementation of follow-on action plans and activities in the participants' home countries by facilitating continued engagement among the participants; advising; and supporting them in the implementation of community service projects; and offering opportunities to reinforce the ideas, values and skills learned during the exchange. Follow-on activities may include a virtual component;
 - b. Announce, disperse, support, and monitor ECA alumni follow-on small grants;
 - c. Connect newly returned program participants with alumni from previous program years, the wider Sports Visitor Program network, and from other U.S. Government sponsored programs to help

reintegrate them into their home communities post-exchange, and to build and strengthen the alumni network; and

- d. (optional) Arrange site visits by project staff, trainers, or educators to further the training started during the exchange. Proposed visits must be discussed in adequate detail within the proposal.

5. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

- a. Design a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) that outlines plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions, as outlined in the Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation section of the NOFO;
- b. Track and report on specific program and budget metrics including: partners per program (specifically K-12 and higher education, NGO and businesses), program costs (total per exchange and per participant, money spent in communities), current financials and projected spend plan based on future programming, the impacts of alumni action plans and success stories, and relevant media;
- c. Ensure pre-travel and post-program surveys or interviews are conducted, translated into all appropriate languages, and shared with the ECA Program Office for purposes of monitoring and evaluation and program improvement; and
- d. Design and implement a data management system to securely track and store accurate programmatic quantitative data (e.g., participant numbers by country, number of follow-on small grant applications and awarded grants, follow-on grant impact data) and qualitative data (e.g., recorded participant quotes, email testimonials from participants, follow-on small grant success stories) for the creation of engaging and accessible reports, highlights, and program reviews with the ECA Program Office. Proposal should demonstrate staff capacity to manage this type of system and applicants are encouraged to consider use of AI to strengthen implementation systems. Proposals should attach examples of prior work in this area.

6. Administrative

- a. Provide programmatic and administrative oversight of the programs;
- b. Manage all financial aspects of the program, including stipend disbursements to the participants, as applicable;
- c. Manage all sub-awards, both programmatically and financially; develop and implement a thorough plan for oversight with a special focus on ensuring the safety and well-being of all participants; coordinate logistical and administrative arrangements for participants; and provide programmatic and administrative management of the programs including ongoing oversight of the sub-award recipient organizations;
- d. Clearly outline and describe the roles and responsibilities of all proposed partner organizations in terms of project logistics, management, and oversight;
- e. Prepare necessary educational and promotional materials that support the program. All materials 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. All ECA Award Recipients must adhere to the requirements in ECA's Communications Guidance on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press;
- f. Collaborate with ECA and current implementing partner on transfer of program data, databases, websites, and other relevant information for the seamless transfer of program and administrative responsibilities;
- g. Provide timely regular progress reports to ECA and comply with financial and program reporting requirements;
- h. Participate in regular program reviews with the ECA Program Office to assess program implementation;
- i. Prepare and share program and/or alumni highlights and success stories in a timely fashion with the ECA Program Office;
- j. Submit proposed changes to staffing plans and/or key personnel to the ECA Program and Grants Officers for approval;
- k. Respond fully and promptly to requests for program information from the ECA Program Office;
- l. Design and maintain engaging and high-quality program website;
- m. Secure professional photography for key portions of each exchange

and upload photos to an online platform accessible to ECA and posts;
and

- n. Develop and implement a high-quality communication plan that highlights program goals and impacts through appropriate media formats including, but not limited to: program branding, press strategy, press/media packets, blog posts, photo and video highlights, media pitches and social media plan.

Substantial Involvement:

In a cooperative agreement, the Department of State is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. See Department of State responsibilities in the NOFO.

II. PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

See Program Specific Guidelines section in the NOFO. In addition:

Participant Monitoring: The award recipient will develop and implement a comprehensive plan to monitor the participants' safety and well-being while on the exchange and to create opportunities for participants to share potential issues and resolve them promptly. The award recipient will be required to provide proper adult supervision to ensure that the program participants have safe and enriching programs. Staff, in coordination with the adult coaches/chaperones, will assist the youth with cultural adjustments, provide societal context to enhance learning, and counsel students as needed.

Criminal background checks, including a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry, must be conducted for all program staff who will have contact with participants.

Award recipients must immediately inform the ECA Program Office about any significant health or safety issues affecting program participants as they arise. Regardless of the level of severity, or how easily it can be resolved, it is essential that the ECA Program Office be notified for awareness.

Participants must be given emergency contact information cards prior to their

travel.

III. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

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

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

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

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

Narrative:

In no more than 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages (with one-inch margins, size 12 font), provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below. In the narrative, applicants should not only describe major programs activities but also explain and justify their programmatic choices.

1. Vision (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits): Describe the project objectives and the desired outcomes, i.e., the knowledge, skills, and/or attitudinal changes that the participants will acquire.
2. Participating Organization(s): Identify existing youth sports camps (if using) and other critical partner organizations (and/or consultants) for the exchanges, their roles, and the reasons for including them. Applicants must

also detail the division of program responsibilities between the award recipient and the partner organization(s). Applicants should also indicate how they will monitor the performance of their overseas partner(s), where applicable. See *International-Based Exchanges – Sub-Award Solicitations, Partners, Locations, and U.S. Embassy Involvement* in the NOFO for further information on sub-award requirements.

3. Recruitment and Selection: Describe how the applicant will conduct open recruitment and competitive selection of American youth and coaches/chaperones. Present a plan for advertising the program and outline within the proposal both the process and the criteria by which finalists will be selected for U.S.-based exchanges. For International-based exchanges, present the guidance and criteria you would provide to sub-award recipients for recruiting and selecting American participants. See *U.S.-Based Exchanges for High School-Age Participants, International-Based Exchanges for High-School-Age Participants, International-Based Exchanges for College-Age Participants* in the NOFO for further information on recruitment and selection.
4. Program Activities: Describe the components of the exchange and how they respond to the program as outlined in the NOFO. Applicants should clearly detail which existing youth sports camps they are proposing to include and/or outline the creation of customized youth sports camps.
5. Travel, Housing, and Other Logistics: Describe in detail how the applicant will arrange and manage international travel (in compliance with the Fly America Act); in-country or domestic travel; lodging arrangements or homestays, if used (be specific about the recruitment, screening, and monitoring processes); ground transportation; stipend disbursement; and other relevant administrative matters.
6. Participant Monitoring: Detail a plan to assure the well-being, safety, and security of program participants during all stages of the program. A competitive monitoring plan should include the following:
 - a. The information provided in PDO materials on safety and the avenues for youth to communicate concerns to staff;
 - b. The staff supervision plan for when the participants are in hotels and/or dormitories;

- c. Screening of host families, if used, including criminal background checks for all household members over the age of 18 and monitoring of participants while they are in homestays; and
 - d. A comprehensive emergency action plan.
7. Program Performance Monitoring: Include a plan describing how the applicant organization will work with ECA to measure and meet program monitoring goals. See Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the NOFO solicitation for more information.
 8. Institutional Capacity and Project Management: Outline the applicant's capacity to conduct programs of this nature, focusing on three areas of competency: provision of sport-based programs, youth exchanges and age-appropriate programming for youth, and key personnel. Describe the program staffing (individuals by name and responsibilities), qualifications, structure, and resources. If applicable, include this information for partner organizations as well.
 9. Follow-on Activities and Media/Communications: Describe plans to provide and manage follow-on activities and support alumni action plans upon return to their home communities, as well as details of a robust media and communications strategy.
 10. Work Plan/Schedule: Outline the phases of the project planning and implementation for the entire award period. Provide a draft schedule of daily activities of the exchanges in an appendix.

IV. OTHER AWARD INFORMATION

Adherence To All Regulations Governing The J Visa

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

V. APPLICATION SUBMISSION

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

(END)