



Educational and Cultural Affairs

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

**U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
FY 2026 Sports Visitor Program
Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0018011
Application Deadline: May 26, 2026**

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A. Basic Information

1. Overview.

Funding Opportunity Title	FY 2026 Sports Visitor Program
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0018011
Announcement Type	New Cooperative Agreement
Deadline for Applications	May 26, 2026 11:59pm Eastern (Washington DC time)
Assistance Listing Number	19.415
Length of Performance Period	12 to 18 months

Number of Awards Anticipated	One award
Award Amount	Approximately \$4,000,000
Total Available Funding	\$4,000,000, pending availability of funds
Type of Funding	FY 2026 Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs (ECE) Funds
Funding Instrument Type	Cooperative Agreement
Anticipated Award Date	September 15, 2026

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

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

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

2. Executive Summary.

The Office of Sports Diplomacy of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) invites proposals for the Sports Visitor Program. This international exchange program uses sports to advance the Administration's foreign policy priorities, promote American leadership, and support the U.S. sports economy. The Sports Visitor Program includes countries from all six regions of the world, as determined in consultation with the Department's regional bureaus. The program is authorized under the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (Fulbright-Hays Act), which aims to increase mutual understanding and strengthen ties between the people of the United States and other nations.

The Sports Visitor Program brings together American and international youth and adult coaches/chaperones for thematic, sports-based exchanges. The target audience for this program is American and international youth (ages 15-23) and their adult coaches/chaperones. The program is not intended for elite or professional athletes. Through both U.S.-based and international exchanges, participants develop leadership skills, build lasting bilateral relationships, and explore the positive impact of U.S. laws – such as Title IX and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – on sports and society. The program focuses on peer-to-peer

engagement, cultural exchange, and helping youth become role models and community leaders.

Key program components include:

- Organizing thematic exchanges to meet program goals;
- Integrating with existing youth sports camps and/or creating customized camps to maximize interaction between American and international participants;
- Balancing on-the-field sports training with off-the-field workshops, community service, and cultural activities;
- Launching special initiatives to celebrate America's 250th anniversary and major sporting events hosted in the United States; and
- Providing comprehensive orientations, strong media and communication strategies, and ongoing alumni engagement and follow-on activities.

ECA funding will support approximately five U.S.-based exchanges and approximately seven international-based exchanges, each lasting at least two weeks. The program will also support follow-on projects so participants can share what they learned in their home communities. The award will fund approximately 265 Sports Visitor Program participants (130 foreign and 135 American as detailed in Section 3). Applicants are encouraged to exceed these numbers should their expertise lead to cost-efficiencies.

Eligible applicants include U.S. not-for-profit organizations (including think tanks and NGOs) and U.S. not-for-profit public and private educational institutions with at least four years of experience conducting international exchanges. Applicants must be registered in SAM.gov with a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Only one proposal per organization will be considered.

ECA anticipates that a single award recipient will manage all organizational and administrative responsibilities of the program and select qualified partners (sub-award recipients) to implement the international-based exchanges. Applicants should explain how they will manage and oversee these sub-awards.

B. Eligibility

1. Eligible Applicants.

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

- U.S. Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations
- U.S. Not-for-profit public and private educational institutions

Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

2. Cost Sharing.

There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this program.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements.

- a. All organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid registration in SAM.gov. Please see *Section E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines* for more information.
- b. ECA's Grant Guidelines require that organizations demonstrate at least four years of experience in conducting international exchanges to be eligible for awards exceeding \$130,000 in ECA funding. As noted in *Section A. Basic Information*, ECA anticipates issuing one award, for approximately \$4,000,000. Therefore, organizations must demonstrate four years of experience in conducting international exchanges in your proposal to be eligible to apply under this competition.
- c. All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, Project Objectives, Goals, and Instructions (POGI) document, and the PSI; not doing so may result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.
- d. All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF-424A), detailed line-item budget, and budget narrative.
- e. Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and

EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the PSI document.

- f. Sports Visitor Programs designed solely as on-the-field training camps for elite and/or professional athletes are ineligible under C.2. "Other Eligibility Requirements" below. Elite and/or professional athletes include athletes competing at the highest level of their sport (e.g., Olympic and Paralympic Games, World Championships) and athletes who are paid to participate in professional sports leagues as their primary occupation.
- g. Applicants who are current recipients of awards directly from ECA should make sure the application discusses one or more award that will be open with ECA at the start of the anticipated period of performance for this NOFO. Applicants who do not have current awards directly with ECA, please review the information in the PSI, section D, with additional information that must be provided in your application for it to be eligible.

C. Program Description

1. Authority.

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

2. Purpose.

Sports Diplomacy programs harness the global passion for sports to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities, promote American leadership, and foster investment in the U.S. sports economy. The Sports Visitor Program leverages international sports exchanges to reinforce U.S. leadership, innovation, and excellence on the world stage. Through thematic sports-based exchanges, Sports Visitor programs provide

American and international youth (ages 15-23) and adult coaches/chaperones the opportunity to develop leadership skills, build lasting bilateral relationships, and examine the positive impact of U.S. legislation on sports and society.

3. Program Specific Guidelines.

Applicants are invited to integrate the following competitive proposal components into a Sports Visitor Program for youth athletes (ages 15-23) and adult coaches/chaperones involving both U.S.-based exchanges (for international and American youth) and international-based exchanges (for American youth).

Competitive proposals will demonstrate:

1. Meaningful and consistent exposure between participants and host-country peers through integration with existing youth sports camps and/or creation of customized youth sports camps with host country peers;
2. Cost-efficient program design that maximizes exchange, duration, and participant numbers;
3. Leadership and expertise, and/or strong commitments from U.S.-based and international organizations, in sport, sport for development/diplomacy, and exchange programs;
4. Original and flexible program design that can expand camp options, locations, and/or participant numbers and is responsive to ECA priorities; and
5. High-quality media and communication strategy and organizational expertise to leverage the narrative power of sports and promote the Sports Visitor Program.

Applicants are strongly urged to garner private sector support, where possible. Private sector monies and in-kind offerings may be used, for instance, to fund additional program components in the United States, to increase the number of youth that participate in exchange program activities, to support storytelling/communication, and/or to provide content/technical expertise during exchanges, among other opportunities.

Applicants should be prepared to conduct programming that supports U.S. foreign policy goals in conjunction with mega-sporting events hosted on U.S. soil such as,

but not limited to, the Los Angeles 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games (LA28), and, as applicable, leading up to the 2034 Utah Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Exchange, Duration, and Participant Numbers

The program includes approximately five U.S.-based exchanges and approximately seven international-based exchanges. All exchanges will be a minimum of two weeks (inclusive of travel) in duration. The cumulative total of U.S.-based exchanges will include approximately 130 international and approximately 50 American high-school-age youth (and coaches/chaperones), while the cumulative total of all international-based exchanges will include approximately 40 American high-school-age (15-18) youth and 45 American college-age student-athletes (19-23) (and coaches/chaperones). Each U.S.-based exchange will include youth from all world regions (approximately five youth and one coach/chaperone per country) while each international-based exchange (approximately 10 youth and two coaches/chaperones) will occur in a single foreign country.

Applicants are highly encouraged to go beyond these exchange, duration, and participant numbers should their expertise lead to cost-efficiencies.

Exchange Themes and Content

Each exchange will involve a thematic sports camp in one or multiple locations in the host country. Applicants must create meaningful and consistent interactions with host country peers by integrating with an existing youth sports camp and/or creating a customized youth sports camp involving host country peers. In addition, coach focused programming for the coaches/chaperones will be included, as appropriate, throughout the program.

Each exchange will have a specific theme and sport(s). Applicants are encouraged to outline themes for exchanges based on their expertise and partnerships, including but not limited to the below list of themes. Final decisions on themes and sports will be made in coordination with ECA.

- a. American excellence and innovation in sports
- b. Landmark federal legislation and sports (e.g., Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA))
- c. English as a second language (ESL)

- d. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)
- e. Entrepreneurship
- f. Health and physical fitness
- g. Youth leadership
- h. Others based on applicant expertise or partnerships

In addition to the aforementioned exchange themes, applicants should demonstrate a plan for one specific thematic exchange entitled, **America's Pastime: Celebrating Baseball-Softball and the legacy of America's 250th anniversary ("Freedom 250")**.

Baseball, long celebrated as America's pastime, provides a dynamic platform to highlight American values of teamwork, resilience, and innovation. Baseball-Softball is one of five new or returning additional sports that will be featured at LA28. The America's Pastime exchange will take place in 2027 to bridge the 2026 World Baseball Classic, hosted in the United States in March 2026, and LA28. This initiative will include approximately 25 American and 25 foreign non-elite youth athletes and coaches (cohorts of five youth athletes and one coach/chaperone). The exchange will integrate themes of American excellence, leadership, and achievement into program activities, creating a compelling narrative for celebrating the legacy of Freedom 250.

ECA reserves the right to modify the themes based on the Administration's foreign policy priorities or other circumstances and final decisions of themes and sports will be made in coordination with ECA.

In addition to the aforementioned primary themes, all exchanges should include foundational information on: the structure of sports in the U.S. from grassroots community-based to elite-level; sports integration with U.S. high school and college education systems; the background, legacy, and impact of Title IX and the ADA on sports in the U.S.; the role of sports in promoting youth leadership and civic engagement; sports business, management, and social impact; mental health and performance; and community service and volunteering among other topics.

During each exchange, the participants' experience will be split (40%/60%) between time on the field (40%) in sport-specific training and off-the-field (60%) in workshops and interactive trainings, community service, visits to high schools and universities, home hospitality, local cultural and sports activities, and site visits that deepen participants' understanding of the host country culture, history, government, and

current affairs. Applicants should endeavor to maximize peer-to-peer interaction and create opportunities for consistent and meaningful engagement with host country peers. Proposals should include at least one formal opportunity for participants to share their culture and experience with host country peers. This should not be in-lieu of aforementioned consistent and meaningful engagement throughout the exchange.

U.S.-Based Exchanges for High School-Age Participants

Applicants must detail integration with existing youth sports camps and/or outline the creation of customized youth sports camps. Each U.S.-based exchange must include a minimum of one American cohort of participants (approximately five youth and one coach/chaperone). Applicants should detail how each exchange, whether integrating into an existing youth sports camp or customizing a youth sports camp, will maximize American and international peer interaction.

International participant recruitment will be managed entirely by the Department of State, through U.S. embassies and consulates. Participants will primarily be English speaking, although applicants should budget for professional interpretation for approximately one-to-two languages per each U.S.-based exchange. Applicants are encouraged to increase the number of interpreted languages per U.S.-based exchange through cost-efficiencies and/or technological or other creative solutions.

American participant recruitment will be managed by the applicant, and the proposal must demonstrate a plan to recruit and competitively select American youth participants. ECA strongly encourages applicants to recruit a variety of youth, leveraging relationships with U.S. sport-based youth development organizations throughout the United States. Selection criteria for high school-age youth should at a minimum include leadership and academic skills, social/emotional maturity, flexibility, international/cultural curiosity, community engagement, and foundational experience in sport. Coaches/chaperones may be teachers, coaches, sport for development organizational representatives, or similar.

Homestays are permissible for inbound exchanges, and if used, the applicant must demonstrate capacity and outline a plan for recruiting, screening, and selecting home stay families. Exchanges will primarily occur during summer months in the United States, although applicants may propose exchanges for other timelines based on programming opportunities and school calendars.

International-Based Exchanges – Sub-Award Solicitations, Partners, Locations, and U.S. Embassy Involvement

For international-based exchanges, applicants are required to solicit sub-award proposals from U.S.-based organizations or educational institutions for each exchange (detailed below). Proposals must include a clear plan for publicizing the opportunity, selecting sub-awardees, sharing final recommendations with ECA for approval, and administering and managing sub-awards. When soliciting for sub-award proposals, applicants will require sub-award proposals to demonstrate the following:

- a. Capacity for delivering sports-specific content in the host country and the capacity to manage logistics and cultural/off-the-field programming in the host country;
- b. Ability to identify viable, experienced in-country partners or have their own in-country locations;
- c. A plan to create meaningful and consistent interactions with host country peers by integrating with existing youth sports camps and/or demonstrating a plan for a customized youth sports camp with host country peers; and
- d. A clear plan for managing all aspects of a competitive American participant recruitment and selection process.

Final decisions for international locations will be made in coordination with ECA and the regional bureaus. Applicants and their sub-awardees should remain flexible to program in countries not outlined in their proposal. The ratio of American youth to coaches should be approximately 10:2 for each exchange. Participants need not speak the host country language; applicants and their sub-awardees should plan for appropriate professional interpretation and translation services.

Should applicants and their sub-awardees need to create a customized youth sports camp for international-based exchanges, they are encouraged to include host-country youth and chaperones. Refer to Section 7 for allowable costs associated with this. For international-based exchanges with a customized youth sports camp, the ratio of international youth to American participants should not exceed two to one.

It is important that the proposal narrative clearly state the applicant's commitment to coordinate with and involve the Public Diplomacy Section staff at the U.S. embassy in the host country, to the extent feasible, while at the same time the

applicant and their sub-awardees must be able to manage the program in the host country in its entirety, with little reliance on embassy staff for support.

International-Based Exchanges for High-School-Age Participants

For the international-based exchanges for high-school-age youth, participants will be U.S. citizens currently enrolled in secondary school or graduates of the academic year immediately preceding the exchange. ECA strongly encourages applicants and their sub-awardees to recruit a variety of youth, leveraging relationships with U.S. sport-based youth development organizations throughout the United States. Selection criteria for high school-age youth should at a minimum include leadership and academic skills, social/emotional maturity, flexibility, international/cultural curiosity, community engagement, and foundational experience in sport. Coaches/chaperones may be teachers, coaches, sport for development organizational representatives, or similar.

International-Based Exchanges for College-Age Participants

For the international-based exchanges for American college-age youth, participants will be current U.S. citizen student-athletes. ECA encourages applicants and their sub-awardees to work with a variety of institutions throughout the United States, to include organizations with adaptive sports programs. Applicants and their sub-awardees should demonstrate how the international-based exchange is integrated into larger student-athlete life initiatives, such as the culmination of a course or other programming at the institution, separate from the exchange. Applicants and their sub-awardees may leverage alumni and connections from the U.S.-based exchanges in developing international-based exchange activities. College-age participants may serve as on-the-field coaches of sports-based activities in the host country, but the exchange activities should not only be designed as one-way interactions with host country participants. Selection criteria for college-age youth should at a minimum include leadership and academic skills, social/emotional maturity, flexibility, international/cultural curiosity, community engagement, and current student-athlete affiliation. Coaches/chaperones may be teachers, coaches, school administrators, sport for development organizational representatives, or similar.

Orientations

Applicants will conduct pre-departure and welcome orientations for the participants to introduce them to the host community and to prepare them for the activities ahead. The orientations should include a general political, historical, educational, and cultural introduction to the host country, information related specifically to the objectives and themes of the program, and practical and administrative information. Every orientation must include a discussion on codes of conduct, including resources for reporting inappropriate behavior. Applicants should consider including the participants' parents/guardians in the pre-departure orientation or providing them with separate materials including standard operating procedures in emergency situations and the organizations safeguarding policies and procedures. Applicants should invite the U.S. embassy and ECA to participate in the pre-departure orientation.

Exchange Follow-on

All participants will be responsible for developing action plans to implement upon returning to their communities. Applicants should demonstrate a well-developed plan for supporting the design, implementation, and monitoring of action plans. Participants will have the opportunity to apply for small- and medium-sized grants to support action plan implementation from the applicant through this cooperative agreement. The applicant should detail how they will manage funds transfers to American and international participants and should maintain a robust data management system for tracking, summarizing, and highlighting alumni action plans and other success stories. ECA welcomes creative plans that support American and international alumni and further the goals of the Sports Visitor Program, such as, but not limited to, networking, mentorship, training, and/or developing a youth alumni representative group to inform future programming.

4. Recipient Responsibilities.

The activities and the roles and responsibilities of the recipient for this program are outlined in the attached POGI document.

5. Goals and Objectives.

The Sports Visitor Program is designed to achieve the following goals:

1. Advance U.S. foreign policy goals;
2. Showcase U.S. sporting excellence and innovation;
3. Prepare youth leaders to become role models and contributing members of their communities;

4. Facilitate meaningful and consistent sports experiences between American and international youth; and
5. Foster investment in the U.S. sports economy.

The objectives of the Sports Visitor Program are for participants to:

1. Increase and deepen understanding of U.S. society, culture, and history to dispel stereotypes;
2. Recognize the role of sports in promoting fair play and open competition;
3. Associate the United States' landmark legislation (e.g., Title IX, Americans with Disabilities Act) with excellence, opportunity, and innovation in sports;
4. Develop leadership, teamwork, resilience, confidence, and conflict resolution skills; and
5. Build lasting relationships with American and international peers.

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

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

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

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

- Demographic Questions as outlined in the **Indicator Book** on page v and **Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)** (See the MODE Resource Guide - <https://app.box.com/s/qjo8icwj46tc8h1i1qtg80zl7ibwgtua> – found on our website <https://www.state.gov/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/>)
- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
 - o Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities
 - E1.1.01: Percent of participants reporting that their program experience offered opportunities to engage with other cultures
 - E1.1.04: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government (core indicator)
 - E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator)
 - E1.1.10: Percent of foreign participants who traveled to the United States for the first time during their program (core indicator)
 - E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American people (core indicator)
 - E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator)
 - E1.1.19: Percent of foreign participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries
 - Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster participants' belief that civic engagement benefits communities/countries
 - E2.2.01: Percent of participants who have more confidence in their ability to have an impact in their home country (core indicator)
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
 - E3.0.02: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of Americans (core indicator)
 - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)
- o 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

- Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
- E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
- E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts (core indicator)
- Objective 8: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau's resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships
- E8.0.03: Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

Performance Monitoring Plans (PMPs)

ECA recommends the use of a PMP to serve as the primary reference document for performance monitoring for this award. If used, the PMP is an important part of any proposal, as it outlines how the applicant plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions. A PMP document that includes all MODE Framework indicators is a part of this solicitation's attachments. Specific instructions on how to modify the PMP to be responsive to this solicitation are included in that document; there is also a support video available for more information on how to fill out the PMP: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBHC1oLNZvl>. While ECA recommends the applicant use the PMP format provided, this is not a requirement. If a PMP is not included in the proposal, applicants should provide similar information to that found in the suggested PMP format, in a presentation of your choice. Successful PMPs (or similar documentation) should include the following:

- **Objectives.** Programmatic objectives are statements of the condition(s) that state what the program is designed to achieve. Objectives are therefore bound by the resources and timeframe of the program and must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART). In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the MODE Framework or other applicant-designed program-specific objectives.
- **Indicators.** Performance indicators are measures used to gauge progress toward programmatic objectives and sub-objectives. Indicators should be as specific as possible (following the SMART principles) and include any proposed disaggregations (meaning, breakdowns of the data by subgroups; the PMP lists the demographic questions required to obtain the information necessary to report the disaggregations). Each indicator should also include a target number to be achieved. A target is a planned level of result to be achieved within an explicit timeframe.
 - If you do not use the PMP format provided, note that any performance monitoring reference document the applicant submits should include

- the information in the column headers (Indicator Name, Definition, Target, Survey Question, etc.) in the PMP attachment at a minimum.
- In addition to those indicators outlined in above, the applicant may propose additional custom, program-specific indicators in the PMP (ECA recommends the proposed PMPs include a minimum of one indicator for each custom programmatic objective).
 - During the period of performance of the award, the ECA program office may further revise, add, or remove indicators. Therefore, the applicant's PMP and data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established.

Award recipients are responsible for collecting indicator data only on participant outcomes during the period of performance of the award itself (see the PMP for guidelines as to when these data collection efforts should occur). ECA will measure outcomes of ECA participants at one, three, five, and 10 years after the exchange has ended to capture the long-term outcomes of ECA programming unless otherwise specified in the solicitation. In this instance, the recipient will be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to de-duplicate questions and minimize potential survey fatigue.

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

Program Performance M&E Narrative

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

- An overview of resources available to the applicant that outline the team structure and responsibilities surrounding performance monitoring.
- The mechanism(s) through which surveys and other data collection tools (if applicable) will be administered, including which platform will be used, and when and how surveys will be advertised to participants – detailing strategies to ensure adequate survey response rates (<https://app.box.com/s/pn6tavyg7sh064i502fzap49ox63y38a>), and to reduce selection and non-response bias.
- A brief explanation of data analysis and reporting procedures.

- An overview of a proposed learning plan and feedback loops to ensure that the Grant Officer (GO)/Grant Officer Representative (GOR) are informed on performance monitoring issues at regular intervals.

Nonmandatory Use of the Qualtrics MODE Survey Builder Data Collection System

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

MyGrants RPM Reporting Requirements

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

7. Allowable Costs.

- a. Travel: Staff and participant travel. This should include travel expenses for host-country participants. International and domestic airfare; passports; visas; transit costs; ground transportation; travel allowance to cover incidentals; required vaccinations as necessary. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act. There is no charge for J-1

- visas for participants in Bureau sponsored programs. Staff travel may include costs for a D.C.-based implementers meeting for appropriate staff.
- b. Lodging and Per Diem: For U.S.-based programming, applicants should use the published Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>. Dormitory style housing is appropriate for participants. ECA requests that applicants budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed Federal per diem rates. Foreign per diem rates can be accessed at: https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78.
 - c. Interpreters and translation: When applicants propose to use interpreters, the following expenses should be included in the budget: published Federal per diem rates (both "lodging" and "M&IE") and transportation costs per interpreter. Bureau funds cannot support interpreters who accompany delegations from their home country or travel internationally. Proposals may contain costs to purchase, develop, and translate materials for participants.
 - d. Sports camps: Costs associated with customized camps including lodging, meals, transportation, and sports apparel for host country youth and chaperone(s) and/or other necessary sports camp related costs when pre-existing camp options are unavailable, per program specific guidelines above. Costs associated with integrating into a pre-existing sports camp including reasonable camp fees for participants and/or other necessary sports camp related costs.
 - e. Book and Cultural Allowances: Participants are entitled to a cultural allowance up to \$200 per person to cover participation in cultural events, plus a book and educational materials allowance not to exceed \$100. Interpreters should be reimbursed up to \$200 for expenses when they escort participants to cultural events. Program staff, trainers, and consultants are not eligible to receive these benefits.
 - f. Consultants: Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise, develop content, or to make presentations. Honoraria rates should not exceed the equivalent of a GS-15/Step 10 daily salary (approximately \$736 per day) and can be prorated for less than a full day. Applicants are encouraged to cost-share rates that would exceed \$250 per day.
 - g. Room Rental: The rental of meeting space should not exceed \$250 per day. Any rates that exceed this amount require explicit justification or should be cost-shared.

- h. Materials: Applicants should expect to submit a copy of all program materials to ECA, and ECA support should be acknowledged on all materials developed with its funding.
- i. Equipment: Applicants may propose to use award funds to purchase and ship equipment, such as computers, printers, or sports equipment; these costs should be justified in the budget narrative. Costs for furniture are not allowed.
- j. Working Meal: A maximum of one working meal may be authorized per project unless extenuating circumstances exist, in which case prior approval must be obtained from a DOS Grants Officer. Unless additional working meals are approved, applicants agree to reduce the participants' per diem to cover the cost of any additional working meals. In addition, per capita costs may not exceed \$45 excluding room rental. The number of invited guests shall not exceed participants by more than a factor of two-to-one.
- k. Health Benefits: The Bureau offers the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) plan for participants in this program when not in their home country or country of domicile. There is no cost to applicants if they opt to use the ASPE plan. If applicants wish to use a different plan, they must demonstrate that such alternate plan provides comparable or more comprehensive coverage. Coverage must begin when participants depart their home countries and not conclude until they return home. If you choose not to use ASPE, your proposal must include a copy of your chosen insurance policy and must include the cost of the insurance in the budget. The insurance you propose to use must meet the requirements of 22 CFR 62.14. Details of the ASPE policy can be provided by your primary point of contact in ECA. The premium is paid by ECA and should not be included in the proposal budget. Applicants must either ensure pre-existing health benefit coverage or secure health benefit coverage for U.S.-based exchange American participants while on the program; 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. This coverage must meet the requirements of 22 CFR 62.14.
- l. Wire Transfer Fees: When necessary, applicants may include costs to transfer funds to partner organizations or individuals overseas. Applicants are urged to research applicable taxes that may be imposed on these transfers by host governments.
- m. Sub-awards and Small Grants: Sub-awards may be used and activities must be included in an itemized budget. Approximately \$175,000 in small grants to

support participant action plans may be budgeted with each small grant being issued for approximately \$1,000 to \$3,000.

- n. Follow-on activities: Including events that bring together program alumni for networking, mentorship, training, and/or a youth alumni representative group.
- o. Program monitoring, evaluation, and learning: Costs associated with systems and implementation of MELI to improve programming.
- p. Reasonable Accommodations: Cost associated with supporting participants needing reasonable accommodations during exchange programming, recruitment, or follow-on.
- q. Staff Salaries and Benefits: Costs necessary for the effective administration of the program may include salaries for the applicant's employees, fringe benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the Application Package.
- r. Technology: Costs related to data and project management systems, program website, or online application systems.
- s. Other justifiable expenses directly related to supporting program activities.

8. Cost Share.

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

9. Freedom and Democracy Guidelines.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries

described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

10. Virtual Exchange Component.

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

In addition to planning for virtual exchange activities if in-person programming is prohibited, ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange components could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange components 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.

11. 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.

12. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial.

ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as “Freedom 250” – a truly global celebration. As the period of performance for this award is scheduled to cover part or all of calendar year (CY) 2026, the applicant may wish to consider ways the program can celebrate Freedom 250. Any Freedom 250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided Freedom 250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

13. Substantial Involvement.

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

- a. For U.S.-based exchanges, identify countries and coordinate international participant selection with U.S. embassies and consulates;
- b. Approve final and alternate selection of American participants for U.S.-based and international exchanges;
- c. Arrange meetings with U.S. Department of State Officials in Washington, D.C., when feasible; and
- d. Approve final selection of sub-award partners and make recommendations for changes or replacements of sub-award partners when program goals are not being met.

D. Application Contents and Format

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

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the PSI, which contains guidelines for proposal preparation.

1. Budget Format.

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

Budget requests may not exceed \$4,000,000. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

2. Content of Application.

Please see the PSI for information about the application and formatting guidelines.

E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. Address to Request Application Package.

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov> or from the ECA website at <https://www.state.gov/eca-grant-opportunities/>.

2. Department of State Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Matt Ferner, U.S. Department of State, Office of Sports Diplomacy, ECA/PE/SD, 202-316-3514, FernerMM@state.gov.

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

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

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

Required Registrations

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from this NOFO.

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

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

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

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

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

Exemptions

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See [2 CFR 25.110](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-25/subpart-110/section-25.110) for a full list of exemptions.

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

4. Required Registration with MyGrants.

All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's MyGrants system by accessing <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com> and clicking the "create an account" link. MyGrants is the U.S. Department of State's grants management system and is supported by the Department's Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). Recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories that have previously used MyGrants as a U.S. Department of State award recipient do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact the ILMS Help Desk for help in gaining access.

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

5. Submission Instructions.

Method of Submission

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

Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures

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

How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

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

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

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration>

How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov

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

Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues

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

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

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

Email: support@grants.gov

6. Submission Dates and Times.

Application Deadline Date.

Tuesday, May 26, 2026 11:59pm Eastern (Washington DC time)

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

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you begin the submission process through Grants.gov well in advance of the application deadline.

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Funding Restrictions for this Announcement.

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

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

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

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

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

c. Iran Programming

A critical component of current U.S. government Iran policy is the support for indigenous Iranian voices. The State Department has made the awarding of grants for this purpose a key component of its Iran policy. As a condition of licensing these activities, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has requested the Department of State to follow certain procedures to effectuate the goals of Sections 481(b), 531(a), 571, 582, and 635(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as amended); 18 U.S.C. §§ 239A and 239B; Executive Order 13224; and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6. These licensing conditions mandate that the Department conduct a vetting of potential Iran grantees and sub-grantees for counter-terrorism purposes. To conduct this vetting the Department will collect information from grantees and sub-grantees regarding the identity and background of their key employees and Boards of Directors.

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of Iran complies with requirements, please contact Matt Ferner, 202-316-3514 and fernermm@state.gov for additional information.

d. Palestinian Authority, West Bank, and Gaza Programming

All awards made under this competition must be executed according to all relevant U.S. laws and policies regarding assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and to the West Bank and Gaza. Organizations must consult with relevant Public Affairs Offices before entering into any formal arrangements or agreements with Palestinian organizations or institutions.

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact Matt Ferner, 202-316-3514 and fernermm@state.gov for additional information.

e. Certification Regarding Compliance with Applicable Federal Anti-Discrimination Laws

If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this NOFO will be within the United States, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:

- i. Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code and;
- ii. It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

f. Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and Any Other Applicable Foreign Funding Disclosure Requirements for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE).

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

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

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

(a) Definitions.

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

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

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

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

(b) Prohibition.

Recipients of funding under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (including subawards and subcontracts issued by the recipient) will be prohibited from:

- (1) delivering any FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system, which includes unmanned aircraft (i.e., drones) and associated elements;
- (2) Operating a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system in the performance of the award; and
- (3) Using Federal funds for the purchase or operation of a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system .

c) Exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.

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

8. Other Submission Requirements.

- a. Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov.
- b. All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF-424A), detailed line-item budget, and budget narrative.
- c. Key Personnel
ECA recommends that the applicant identify intended key personnel positions via an asterisk (*) or other marking in the proposal budget, budget

narrative, or a separate appendix. If not provided in the application, recipients must submit the names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Applicants should also identify what proportion of their time will be used in support of the program. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions.

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

F. Application Review Information

1. Review Process.

ECA will check that all proposals meet the technical requirements in this solicitation. Proposals that do not meet the guidelines, including those under the eligibility section above or in the PSI, will be ineligible for further review.

All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office before being reviewed by an ECA grant panel. Applications may also be reviewed by Public Diplomacy sections overseas, State Department regional bureaus, or other State Department offices, as appropriate. All reviewers, including the ECA grant panels, will review any eligible proposals based on the criteria below.

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

2. Review Criteria.

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

- a. **Quality of Program Idea:** Proposals must present a clear, compelling, and original concept, with substantive detail, that directly addresses the solicitation. Program proposals should demonstrate thematic relevance, foster lasting relationships among participants, include age-

appropriate content, support U.S. foreign policy goals and, where possible, align with upcoming major sporting events hosted in the United States.

- b. Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives:** Proposals should include a detailed agenda and work plan with a clear timetable for major tasks, demonstrating how program goals and objectives will be achieved. Proposals must specify whether participants will be integrated into existing youth sports camps and/or attend camps customized by the applicant, and outline locations, themes, and sports based on the applicant's expertise and/or partnerships. For U.S.-based exchanges, proposals must describe in detail the substance of workshops, training sessions, and other activities; present a comprehensive strategy to recruit American youth athletes; and address interpretation needs for participants. For international-based exchanges, proposals must include a clear plan for recruitment, selection, and management of sub-award recipients. Program planning should demonstrate flexibility to adapt camp options, locations, and participant numbers in response to ECA priorities and evolving circumstances, and should maximize peer-to-peer interaction and meaningful engagement with host country peers.
- c. Institutional Capacity:** Applicants must demonstrate the organizational capacity to implement the program, including relevant experience with youth exchanges, sports programming, and responsible fiscal management. Proposals should include information on key personnel, partners, and ability to recruit, select, and manage sub-award recipients, as well as a record of successful coordination with U.S. and international sports entities. Letters of support from proposed partners and existing youth sports camp implementers (if applicable) are required.
- d. Cost-effectiveness and cost share:** Proposals should minimize overhead costs and ensure all costs are necessary and appropriate. Competitive proposals will maximize cost share through private sector support and institutional direct funding contributions. Applicants should demonstrate efficient use of ECA funds.
- e. Follow-on Activities, Media and Communication Strategy, and Multiplier Effect:** Proposed programs should strengthen long-term relationships between Americans and their international peers, including the establishment of long-term institutional linkages. Applicants should demonstrate a well-developed plan for supporting, implementing, and monitoring participant action plans, including management of small grants and robust data tracking of alumni outcomes. Proposals should include strategies for engaging alumni from previous or other ECA-funded

exchange programs, in consultation with the ECA Program Office and relevant U.S. embassies or consulates. Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activities without Bureau support, ensuring programs are not isolated events. Proposals should also include a robust media and communication plan to promote the program, highlight participant experiences, and leverage the narrative power of sports.

- g. **Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Proposals should have a fully developed M&E plan that includes goals, objectives, and indicators. The plan should be feasible and aligned with the M&E section of this solicitation. Proposals should include a realistic learning plan that outlines how your organization plans to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices. All submitted M&E plans will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided at least the required information outlined in the M&E section of this solicitation and demonstrated the applicant's capacity to carry out the M&E plan.

3. Indirect Costs

If two or more applications receive equivalent scores based on the evaluation criteria outlined in this NOFO, preference will be given to the applicant with the lower indirect cost rate, as consistent with Executive Order 14332, Section 4(b)(iii). This preference will only be applied as a tie-breaking mechanism and does not supersede the primary evaluation criteria.

4. Risk Review

Under the merit review as required by 2 CFR 200.206, prior to making a Federal Award, the Department will review and consider the following risk factors:

- a. Financial stability
- b. Management systems and standards
- c. History of performance
- d. Audit reports and findings
- e. Ability to effectively implement requirements

5. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov.

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

An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available at SAM.gov.

Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 CFR 200.206, the Department will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

G. Award Notices.

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal ECA procedures. The award or cooperative agreement will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer in ECA's Grants Division and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer (as identified in the application) for review and countersignature. The recipient may only start incurring project expenses beginning on the start date shown on the fully signed award document.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding.

Unsuccessful applicants:

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition following the completion of the review process.

Payment Method:

Payments under this award will be made through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS).

H. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply.

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

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

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

- [2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION](#)

- [2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS](#)

- [2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE \(FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE\)](#)

- [2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY](#)
- [2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS](#)
- [U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#)
- Recipients must comply with all applicable Executive Orders A searchable list can be found in the Federal Register: <https://www.federalregister.gov/>

2. Reporting.

Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify what reports are required and how often these reports must be submitted. All reports must be submitted in a timely manner.

For planning purposes, applicants can expect to provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

- Performance Progress Reports (PPRs)** shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual, quarterly, or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. All reports and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this award in MyGrants.
- The **Federal Financial Reports** (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/post-award-reporting-forms>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the recipient must upload the approved report to MyGrants, in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the recipient's eligibility for future awards.
- Required **MODE data** (see Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation section) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. MODE data reporting shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. The frequency of these reports will be determined by MELI and the Program Officer. Either a standard report template (if using the MODE Survey Builder) or aggregate data and the raw data file (if Recipient uses their own survey platform) must be uploaded by the Recipient as an RPM Performance Report under the corresponding record for this award in MyGrants.
- A **final program and financial report** no more than 120 days after the period of performance of the award ends or termination of the award.

e. Program Data Requirements: Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants 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:

- 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.
- 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.

Applicants should be aware of the post award reporting requirements reflected in [2 CFR 200 Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters](#).

3. Branding and Marking

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

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

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

I. Other Information

Adherence To All Regulations Governing the J Visa

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

orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

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

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

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