



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)
FY26 U.S. Creative Tech Exchange
Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0018285
Application Deadline: July 6, 2026

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A. Basic Information

1. Overview.

Funding Opportunity Title	FY26 U.S. Creative Tech Exchange
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0018285
Announcement Type	New Cooperative Agreement
Deadline for Applications	July 6, 2026 11:59pm Eastern (Washington DC time)
Assistance Listing Number	19.415
Length of Performance Period	18 months

Number of Awards Anticipated	1 award
Award Amount	Approximately \$1,320,000
Total Available Funding	\$1,320,000, 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 1, 2026

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

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

Pending satisfactory implementation of this program and the availability of funds in 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 U.S. **Creative Tech Exchange (U.S.CTX)** is a new international arts exchange program that drives economic growth by connecting U.S. creative professionals and technologists with international peers working at the intersection of the arts and emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence (AI). The goal is to position American technology as a key driver of American innovation, economic, and cultural influence in art and technology. For the purposes of this program, "arts" refers specifically to architecture, creative coding and gaming, fashion, graphic design, music and immersive art such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR); but excludes film and television.

U.S.CTX will support **up to 30 participants** through short-term, hands-on activities such as collaborative labs, fellowships, workshops, and public showcases.

ECA will award one U.S.-based nonprofit or educational organization \$1.32 million to design and implement the program in close coordination with ECA and U.S. embassies. Applicants should propose a concept that leverages their strengths and includes clear plans for recruitment, program delivery, and measurable outcomes in creative arts, economic impact, and public diplomacy.

See Section C.2 for detailed program purpose and policy alignment.

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 \$1,320,000. Therefore, organizations must demonstrate four years of experience in conducting international exchanges in your proposal to be eligible to apply under this competition.
- c. All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, and the PSI; not doing so may result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

- d. All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed line-item budget, and budget narrative.
- e. Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the PSI document.

- f. Applicants who are current recipients of awards directly from ECA should make sure the application details 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 in order 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.

Professionals in the creative industries have historically been early adopters of emerging technologies, influencing how these tools are approached, applied, and accepted in society. U.S.CTX builds on this tradition as a diplomatic exchange program and a strategic instrument of the Administration's foreign policy, using the creative arts and their intersection with emerging technologies, especially AI, as a vehicle for engagement and positions American creative professionals and technologists at the forefront of global innovation.

By elevating U.S. talent as innovation multipliers, U.S.CTX demonstrates how American ingenuity can set global standards for responsible AI adoption in the creative arts—ensuring entrepreneurship, creativity, and free expression are not compromised. This approach reinforces U.S. economic competitiveness, cultural influence, and technological leadership. Through hands-on exchanges, the program will demonstrate responsible, market-driven uses of AI that reflect America First priorities and deliver measurable economic outcomes.

This program directly supports foreign policy priorities articulated across executive actions and public statements by:

- **Positioning the United States as a global leader in AI and advanced technology through the creative industries**

By showcasing American creative professionals and creative technologists as pioneers in responsible AI and emerging technologies, U.S.CTX ensures that U.S. standards and innovation in the creative sector set the pace for global adoption and influence.

- **Promoting private-sector-led technological growth in the creative industries**

U.S.CTX connects U.S. creative professionals and entrepreneurs with international counterparts, enabling American creative businesses to drive innovation and shape global trends.

- **Expanding global markets for U.S. creative professionals and industries**

By facilitating international engagement, U.S.CTX helps American creative professionals and technologists build networks and partnerships abroad, increasing demand for U.S. creative products, services, and expertise.

- **Enhancing workforce readiness and U.S. economic competitiveness in the creative sector**

U.S.CTX participants gain cutting-edge skills and global perspectives,

strengthening the U.S. creative workforce and ensuring leadership at the arts-technology nexus.

- **Protecting free expression and advancing American innovation in digital creative environments**

Through their work overseas, U.S.CTX participants champion open, ethical, and innovative uses of technology in the creative industries, advancing U.S. interests and countering restrictive approaches.

3. Program Specific Guidelines.

U.S.CTX is a new program, and the components below are examples drawn from past ECA practice. Applicants should design a dynamic program that offers short-term exchanges and collaborative activities, typically five days to six weeks, for American and international participants.

The program should recruit and select up to 30 participants through a transparent, merit-based process in consultation with ECA and U.S. embassies. Core components may include hands-on collaborative project labs in areas such as AI-enabled art, immersive media, and creative coding; short-term fellowships or industry placements; practical skills workshops on topics like AI, intellectual property, and monetization; and mentorship from established artists creative professionals and technologists. Public showcases, whether in-person or virtual, should highlight participant outcomes and amplify program impact.

Applicants are encouraged to propose additional or alternative components that align with program goals and include clear implementation plans. All proposals must justify the duration and structure of each component and outline how programming will be coordinated with ECA and U.S. embassies. U.S. embassies will nominate foreign participants for the program.

What the program does.

U.S.CTX will build a collaborative, cohort-based network aimed to strengthen U.S. leadership and foster alliances at the intersection of creative arts and emerging technologies, with a particular focus on AI.

Through activities such as hands-on labs, targeted placements, practical training, and public showcases, participants prototype new works and tools, gain industry experience, and share their results with audiences at home and abroad.

Who participates.

U.S.CTX recruits up to 30 early- and mid-career creative professionals (ages 19+), balanced between participants from the United States and three to five partner countries (to be determined) who work at the intersection of arts and emerging technologies, including:

- architects
- creative producers
- designers
- game designers/developers
- musicians, composers, producers
- New media and Interactive media practitioners

Selection is transparent and merit-based, prioritizing artistic and professional excellence, innovation potential, and a strong commitment to collaboration. For U.S. participants, recruitment partners may include cultural organizations, industry networks, and institutions.

For international participants, U.S. embassies will nominate candidates based on the same merit criteria (artistic and professional excellence, innovation potential, and commitment to collaboration) and mission priorities with final selection approved by ECA in consultation with U.S. missions and the recipient organization. Any overseas programming will be developed in partnership with U.S. missions to advance the Administration's foreign policy objectives and American interests. Through these collaborations, U.S.CTX delivers tailored engagements such as lectures, masterclasses, residencies, presentations, and workshops led by U.S. industry professionals.

Partner Countries

Final country selection will be determined by ECA in consultation with Department of State regional bureaus.

For budget planning, applicants may consider countries in the Western Hemisphere and/or Indo-Pacific, consistent with ECA's strategic priorities. Proposals should show how programming in these regions will build creative technology

networks that promote U.S. interests. Proposals should outline the organization's capacity to implement U.S.CTX in different international contexts, including the ability to work in locations without existing partners; relevant experience adapting programs to different cultural, technological, or institutional environments; and general factors the organization would consider when adapting the program for different country contexts. Applicants are not required to propose specific countries but should explain how their program design and organizational capacity support successful implementation in any locations ECA may select.

How cohorts work.

Cohorts emphasize sustained engagement, peer learning, and cocreation.

Activities may include collaborative labs, short-term fellowships, workshops, and public showcases. Participants may work in areas such as AI-enabled art, creative coding/gaming, cultural entrepreneurship, digital design, immersive media, music and sound technology. Applicants are encouraged to propose innovative approaches that align with the Administration's foreign policy priorities.

Programming may include:

- **Collaborative Project Labs:** Mentor led sprints pairing U.S. and international participants to prototype AI enabled art, immersive media (VR/AR/MR), creative coding, generative audio, and digital design.
- **Short Term Fellowships & Industry Placements:** Targeted stints with studios, cultural institutions, tech firms, or startups in the U.S. or abroad, focused on real world deliverables and professional credit.
- **Skills Workshops & Clinics:** Practical sessions on responsible AI and data practices, IP/licensing, monetization and export readiness, audience development, accessibility in digital arts, and ethical use of datasets.
- **Mentorship:** Ongoing guidance from established creative professionals, technologists, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders.
- **Public Showcases & Dissemination:** In person or virtual festivals, exhibitions, performances, and toolkits/open resources that share cohort outputs and extend reach.

Where it happens.

Programming can take place in the United States, overseas, or in hybrid formats that may combine in-person and virtual activities. Applicants should select locations strategically to maximize impact, using creative districts, technology hubs, and

institutional partnerships that enhance learning opportunities, industry access, and cultural exchange while advancing U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy goals. Virtual components should complement in-person activities to broaden participation and sustain collaboration throughout the program period.

Proposals must explain how location choices will benefit participants and create strategic impact. Through strategic location selection and program design, U.S.CTX advances U.S. economic goals by increasing global demand for U.S. creative content and services, strengthening international professional networks, and preparing the workforce for creative industries shaped by AI and digital tools. These activities position AI and creative industries as parallel engines of American innovation—grounded in artistic freedom and entrepreneurial spirit.

Economic impact & workforce development.

u.s.CTX advances economic goals by growing global demand for U.S. creative content and services, strengthening international industry networks, and equipping participants with in demand skills for sectors shaped by AI and digital tools. The program connects creatives to collaborators, mentors, and markets, encouraging commercially viable projects, ventures, and market driven innovation.

Alumni community.

u.s.CTX sustains momentum beyond the exchange through a structured alumni network: virtual community spaces, continuing mentorship, collaborative projects, and connections to professional opportunities, creating an enduring pipeline of creators who share knowledge, build ventures, and amplify U.S. creative leadership worldwide.

What Success Looks Like.

- **Global Reach for U.S. Creativity:** Cohorts produce high-quality prototypes, performances, and tools that showcase U.S. leadership in arts-driven innovation and circulate across borders and platforms.
- **Workforce Competitiveness:** Participants gain cutting-edge skills, professional credits, and industry placements that strengthen U.S. creative sectors and advance economic competitiveness.
- **Expanded Markets for U.S. Content:** U.S. creative content, services, and expertise reach new international audiences and partners, driving demand and supporting American cultural entrepreneurship.
- **Networks Anchored in U.S. Interests:** International creative networks deepen around AI and digital practices, reflecting American principles of

artistic freedom, transparency, security, and innovation providing positive options in contrast to more limiting approaches to creative technology.

- **Sustained U.S. Influence:** Alumni continue collaborating globally and launch ventures that amplify U.S. leadership in creative technology while promoting free expression and market-driven innovation.

Proposals Should Include:

- **Creative and Technical Expertise:** Resumes of key staff and personnel with demonstrated experience in managing international exchange programs and expertise in arts-driven innovation and emerging technologies, including relevant credentials or proven success in creative industries and digital tools.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** A detailed description of partner organizations' roles in program delivery, such as collaborative labs, industry placements, and public showcases, supported by letters of intent and staff resumes.
- **Participant Recruitment & Selection:** A transparent, merit-based strategy that prioritizes artistic excellence, innovation potential, along with plans for pre-departure orientations and post-program assessments using both qualitative and quantitative data.
- **Risk and Resource Management:** Plans for participant safety and well-being, disbursement of honoraria and travel costs, and facilitation of passports/visas, consistent with duty-of-care standards.
- **Implementation Agreements:** Clear descriptions of agreements between the award recipient and any sub-awardees or experts, outlining funding terms, deliverables, and compliance with program objectives.

4. Recipient Responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

- a. Design and implement all program components in accordance with the approved proposal and in consultation with ECA.
- b. Recruit, screen, and select up to 30 qualified participants from the United States and three to five partner countries using transparent, merit-based criteria. Partner countries will be determined by ECA in consultation with regional bureaus.
- c. Provide pre-departure orientation and ongoing support to all participants.
- d. Organize and facilitate collaborative project labs, workshops, fellowships, mentorship, and other program activities.
- e. Arrange all logistics for program activities, including travel, accommodations, venues, equipment, materials, and other necessary resources.
- f. Ensure participant safety, security, and well-being throughout the program.

- g. Coordinate with U.S. embassies and consulates in partner countries as appropriate.
- h. Organize public showcases or other events to share participants' work and demonstrate program impact.
- i. Maintain accurate records of all program activities, participants, and expenditures.
- j. Collect and report performance monitoring data as specified in Section C.6.
- k. Submit all required reports in a timely manner.
- l. Develop and implement strategies for alumni engagement and follow-on activities.
- m. Ensure compliance with all applicable regulations, including those governing exchange visitor programs when J-1 visas are used.
- n. Manage all financial aspects of the award in accordance with Federal regulations and Department of State requirements.

5. Goals and Objectives.

Advance U.S. Leadership in Creative-Tech

- Position the United States as the global leader in blending creative arts with AI and emerging technologies, showing how American leadership drive market-driven innovation.

Build Global Networks and Partnerships

- Connect creative professionals, technologists, and creative entrepreneurs worldwide. Foster collaboration, co-production, and knowledge exchange that spark innovation and lasting professional ties.

Champion Freedom of Speech and Expression in Digital Spaces

- Promote freedom of expression and the open exchange of ideas in creative-tech environments. Keep U.S. public diplomacy agile and relevant in a rapidly evolving digital world.

Deliver High-Impact Programming

- Design tailored exchanges that bring American and international participants together for hands-on creative-tech experiences—selected through a competitive process in consultation with Department of State regional bureaus.

Fuel Innovation and Economic Growth

- Grow creative economies and future-ready talent by supporting collaboration at the intersection of art and technology. Expand market access and attract investment to strengthen U.S. competitiveness and create jobs.

Leverage Creative-Tech for Diplomacy

- Advance U.S. foreign policy through cultural and commercial engagement. Use creative-tech programs to forge cultural connections and create diplomatic leverage for the United States.

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)
- E1.1.11: Percent of American participants indicating a change in their understanding of their host country's culture and values
- E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American people (core indicator)
- E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator)
- E1.1.19: Percent of foreign participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries
 - 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
 - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation
 - E4.0.05: Percent of participants who report an increase in technical skills as a result of their program participation
 - Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
 - E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
 - E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts (core indicator)
 - E4.1.04: Number of professional placements
 - 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 NOFO and/or POGI. In this instance, the recipient will be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to de-duplicate questions and minimize potential survey fatigue.

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/pn6tavvg7sh064i502fzap49ox63y38a>), 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.

Proposed budgets should include, but are not limited to, the following **allowable expenses**:

Please Note: The Public Diplomacy Sections (PDS) of participating U.S. missions may cover certain in-country expenses for overseas programming, such as per diem and in-country travel; however, it is not guaranteed. Applicants should therefore include all overseas expenses in their budget and program management plans. The award recipient will be responsible for all costs related to U.S.-based activities and participant support—including travel, accommodations, per diem, visa fees (for outbound participants only), and facilities—as well as U.S.CTX staff travel and expenses.

Personnel (Salaries and Benefits)

1. Salaries and wages for program staff (e.g., project directors, coordinators, financial managers, administrative support). Provide base salary and estimated level of effort in the budget narrative.
2. Fringe benefits consistent with written policies/NICRA or justified percentages (e.g., leave, insurance, pensions, unemployment).
3. Consultant fees for subject-matter experts, mentors, facilitators, or technical specialists (as **contracts** for services—see Contractual section). Standard honoraria should not exceed \$300 per day. Higher amounts to accommodate special circumstances will require ECA review and approval.

Travel

1. **Participants:** International and domestic travel (airfare, ground transport, baggage), accommodations, M&IE per diem, visas, immunizations, registration fees—budget who/where/why. U.S. and domestic flights must comply with the Fly America Act**; use U.S. flag carriers or document allowable exceptions.
2. **Staff:** Travel to conduct site visits, attend program activities, or coordinate with partners; follow GSA CONUS and State/Foreign per diem rates.
3. Excess and overweight baggage fees within reason.
4. Pre-departure orientation travel costs.
5. Airport taxes and applicable country entrance fees.

Participant Support Costs (as defined in 2 CFR 200.1)

1. Lodging/accommodations during program activities; M&IE and incidental expenses; travel allowances.
2. Visa fees and related documentation; health insurance (medical, evacuation, repatriation) if ECA coverage is not used. Immunizations and vaccines as needed.
3. Stipends or allowances for participants, as appropriate (participants are not employees). Stipend amounts should reflect program duration, intensity, and participant opportunity costs:
 - Short-term activities (5-14 days): \$500-\$1,000
 - Medium-term activities (2-4 weeks): \$1,500-\$2,500
 - Extended fellowships (4-6 weeks): \$2,500-\$4,000 Stipend amounts outside these ranges require prior ECA review and approval.
4. Safety, duty of care, and risk management

5. Follow on activities: micro-grants for follow on activities may be competitively awarded to program participants/alumni to support select projects. Total micro-grant funding should not exceed 5% of the FY2026 award.

Maximum limits on cooperative agreement funding for specific expenses are as follows (If costs for these expenses exceed these limits, organizations are encouraged to cost-share any rates that exceed the amounts listed below:

- books and educational materials allowance-\$100 per participant
- cultural allowance-\$150/participant

Equipment and Supplies

1. Equipment (>\$10,000 per unit, useful life >1 year): only if essential to program; requires prior Grants Officer approval and additional reporting.
2. Supplies (<\$10,000 per unit): technology devices, software, materials for workshops, labs, showcases.
3. Equipment rental as needed.
4. Software licenses, cloud compute, and specialized tools for AI/immersive media (as supplies/services).

Contractual / Subawards

1. Subawards to eligible partner organizations/institutions to carry out program components (no subawards to for-profit entities; subcontracts to for-profits are permissible). Include detailed sub budgets.
2. Venue rental for workshops, labs, showcases, or events; production services; specialized technical support (venue, production, shipping, installation, equipment rental).
3. Industry engagement activities, receptions, and other special U.S.CTX related events.

Other Direct Costs

1. Communications, branding, and promotional materials (consistent with ECA guidance and acknowledgment requirements).
2. Documentation and evaluation (M&E) including data collection, surveys, analysis, and reporting.
3. Banking fees and currency exchange costs; costs associated with public showcases/exhibitions.

Other Notes: The recipient organization is responsible for all components of the program outlined in the NOFO. The organization must also inform the ECA program officer, in a timely fashion, of its progress at each stage of the project's implementation.

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.

ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s) is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA

encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project-by-project basis.

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:

- **Program Design & Policy Alignment:** Provide input on program structure, participant criteria, and implementation strategies to ensure alignment with U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy goals.
- **Participant Selection:** Approve the recruitment and selection process, including recruitment channels, selection criteria, committee structure, and timeline. Review and approve final participant rosters to ensure policy alignment and program quality.
- **Strategic Outreach:** Coordinate with U.S. embassies, consulates, and relevant agencies to strengthen impact and local engagement. When possible, arrange participation of State Department representatives in orientations, debriefings, and program assessment sessions.
- **Content & Communications Review:** Approve curricula, workshop content, branding, and major public-facing materials.
- **Public Diplomacy Coordination:** Support media engagement, public showcases, and communications strategies to maximize visibility and impact.

- **Ongoing Policy Guidance:** Advise on how programming advances U.S. priorities in technology leadership, innovation, economic competitiveness, and free expression.
- **Mission Support:** In most cases, U.S. missions will:
 - Arrange and fund in-country costs and logistics (per diems, accommodations, travel).
 - Identify local partners and sites for workshops, labs, or presentations.

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 Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which contains guidelines for proposal preparation.

1. Budget Format.

Applicants must submit a budget (SF-424A), detailed line-item budget, and a budget narrative.

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

2. Content of Application.

Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for information about the application and formatting guidelines.

Proposals should include calendars of activities and/or itineraries (if applicable), resumes and CVs not to exceed two pages, letters of endorsement or commitment.

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: Julia Gómez-Nelson or Jill Staggs, U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges, Cultural Programs Division, ECA/PE/C/CU, 202-623-6409, nelsonjg2@state.gov or staggsjj@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 is completed on any issued award. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts.

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](#) 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 a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

4. Required Registration with MyGrants.

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

Support for Recipient Organizations and recipient contacts and signatories is available 24 hours, 7 days a week (except federal holidays), and can be reached at 1-

888-313-ILMS (4567) or through the ILMS Self Service Portal at <https://afsism.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

Monday, July 6, 2026, by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight 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.

g. 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. 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:

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;

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.

d. 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:

- 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.

e. Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan

Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds \$500,000:

- To the best of the recipient's knowledge, neither the recipient, nor any subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor of the recipient or any agent of the recipient or of such a subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor, is engaged in any of the activities described in 2 CFR 175(a);

The recipient has implemented a Trafficking in Persons compliance plan to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175(a) and is compliant with it; and compliance plan must be consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR 175(b)(4) and (5).

- That the recipient has procedures to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175(a) and to monitor, detect, and terminate any subrecipient, contractor, subcontractor, or employee of the recipient engaging in them.

Recipients do not need to submit a copy of the plan. However, they must provide it to the Grants Officer upon request, and as appropriate, must post the useful and relevant contents of the plan or related materials on their website and at the workplace. Recipients must re-certify on an annual basis for the entire award period of performance.

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

(a) Definitions.

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

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

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

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

(b) Prohibition.

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

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

c) Exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.

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

8. Other Submission Requirements.

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

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

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

F. Application Review Information

1. Review Process.

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

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

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

2. Review Criteria.

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

- a. **Quality of the program idea/Program planning:** Proposals should be original, well-defined, and relevant to ECA's mission. Proposals should have a detailed agenda and work plan that demonstrates your institution's ability to

carry out the program. The plan should follow the program guidelines described in this solicitation and should be likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results.

- b. **Ability to achieve program aims and purpose:** Proposals should clearly state the program's aims and purpose and demonstrate how your institution will meet them.
- c. **Institutional Capacity/Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should include the necessary personnel and institutional resources to achieve the program results. The organization has expertise in administering and implementing international exchange programs and the proposal demonstrates it has internal controls in place to manage federal funds. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs and responsible fiscal management. ECA will consider the past performance of prior ECA recipients, including the timely submission of reports, and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
- d. **Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Proposals should have a fully developed M&E plan that includes goals, objectives, and indicators. The plan should be feasible and aligned with the M&E section of this solicitation. Proposals should include a realistic learning plan that outlines how your organization plans to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices. All submitted M&E plans will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided at least the required information outlined in the M&E section of this solicitation and demonstrated the applicant's capacity to carry out the M&E plan.
- e. **Cost-effectiveness/Cost share:** Proposals should keep the overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost share through other private sector support and institutional direct funding contributions

3. Indirect Costs.

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

4. Risk Review.

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

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

5. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov.

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

An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in 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. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from an authorized Grants Officer in ECA's Grants Division. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by a Grants Officer 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.

The Department of State will review and consider proposals for funding pursuant to this NOFO in accordance with OMB guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, including 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).
- [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 FAA will specify 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:

- h. **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.
- i. 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.
- j. 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 ECA/P/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.

- k. 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.
- l. **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/>

F. 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.

ECA 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