



**U.S. Department of State
U.S. Mission Iraq
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Funding Opportunity Title: Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF)

Funding Opportunity Number: DOS-Baghdad-PD-2024-002

Deadline for Applications: January 31, 2024

Assistance Listing Number: 19.021

Total Amount Available: \$5,000- \$35,000

The U.S. Mission in Iraq announces an open competition for past participants (“alumni”) of U.S. government-funded and U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs to submit applications to the 2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF 2024). We seek proposals from teams of at least two alumni that meet all program eligibility requirements below. Exchange alumni interested in participating in AEIF 2024 should submit proposals to baghdadpdgrants@state.gov by January 31, 2024.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

AEIF provides alumni of U.S. government-sponsored and facilitated exchange programs with funding to expand on skills gained during their exchange experience to design and implement innovative solutions to global challenges facing their community. Since its inception in 2011, AEIF has funded nearly 500 alumni-led projects around the world through a competitive global competition. This year, AEIF 2024 will support the United States’ commitment to initiatives that advance the policy goals of the U.S. Mission to Iraq, which include “fostering stability and economic growth,” “bolstering democracy and governance,” and “ensuring Iraq’s sovereignty and security.”

The U.S. Mission in Iraq will accept public service projects proposed and managed by teams of at least two (2) alumni that support themes such as:

- Women entrepreneurship.
- Disability rights (government and private sectors).
- Climate change.
- English language training for youth and marginalized groups.
- Youth capacity building on politics and governance.
- Youth capacity building on business and skills development.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Announcement posted: November 20, 2023

Closing date for applications: January 31, 2024

Funding type: small grant awards

Decision date: no later than June 1, 2024

Expected size of individual awards: between \$5,000 to \$35,000

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: grant or fixed amount award

Program Performance Period: proposed programs should be completed in 12 months or less

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants:

The following individuals are eligible to apply:

- Applicants must be alumni of a U.S. government-funded or sponsored exchange program (<https://alumni.state.gov/list-exchange-programs>) or a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program (<https://j1visa.state.gov/>).
- Project teams must include teams of at least two (2) alumni.
- Alumni who are U.S. citizens may not submit proposals, but U.S. citizen alumni may participate as team members in a project.
- Alumni teams may be comprised of alumni from different exchange programs and different countries.
- Applications must be submitted by exchange alumni or alumni associations of USG exchange alumni. Not-for-profit, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions are not eligible to apply in the name of the organization but can serve as partners for implementing project activities.

2. Cost Sharing

Inclusion of cost share is not a requirement of this opportunity.

3. Grant Program Area:

Proposals must address the U.S. Mission Iraq goals, which include “fostering stability and economic growth,” “bolstering democracy and governance,” and “ensuring Iraq’s sovereignty and security.”

Proposals that do not address the theme as outlined in the program objectives will be deemed ineligible. All project activities must take place outside of the United States and its territories.

4. Other Eligibility Requirements

AEIF 2024

If the grant will be processed with an individual, that individual is not required to have a UEI (Unique Entity ID) number or be registered in SAM.gov. However, should the grant be processed with an organization that is a partner in the project, that organization must have a UEI, as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Organizations must have a commitment to equal opportunity employment practices and to non-discrimination practices with regard to beneficiaries, without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Application Package

Application and budget templates are available at <https://iq.usembassy.gov/education-culture/grant-programs/>

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Applications and budgets must be submitted using the official AEIF 2024 application and budget forms.

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

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity.
- The proposal addresses all questions in the official AEIF 2024 application form.
- All documents are in English.
- The budget is in U.S. dollars and is submitted using the designated AEIF 2024 budget form.
- All pages are numbered.
- Please do not submit forms in PDF format as it is not supported.

The following documents and information are required:

1. Mandatory application forms

- a. SF-424-I (Application for Federal Assistance --individuals) at <https://iq.usembassy.gov/education-culture/grant-programs/>
- b. SF424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs) at <https://iq.usembassy.gov/education-culture/grant-programs/>
- c. SF424B (Assurances for Non-Construction Programs-Individual) at <https://iq.usembassy.gov/education-culture/grant-programs/>

2. **Project Team Information:** At least two exchange alumni team members are required for a project to be considered for funding. Applications need to provide the name and contact information, describe the role each team member will have in the project, and their experience, qualifications, and ability to carry out that role. Applicants need to indicate what proportion of the team member's time will be used in support of the project.
3. **Proposal Summary:** A short narrative which outlines the proposed project, including challenge(s) to be addressed, project objectives, and anticipated impact.
4. **Project Goals and Objectives:** The goal(s) of the proposed project need to describe what the project is intended to achieve and include the objectives that support the goal(s). Objectives should be specific, measurable, and realistically achievable within a set time frame.
5. **Project Methods, Design, and Timeline:** A description of how the project is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal(s). This should include a description of the project's direct and indirect beneficiaries as well as a plan on how to continue the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable. The proposed timeline for the project activities should include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events. Applicants may also submit proposed workshop or training agendas and materials.
6. **Local Project Partners:** A list of partners who will support the proposed project, if applicable.
7. **Communication Plan:** The communication plan should include a communication and outreach strategy for promoting the proposed project. It may include social media, websites, print news, or other forms of media intended to use to share information about the project to beneficiaries and the public. Communications should include AEIF 2024, Exchange Alumni, and U.S. Embassy branding.
8. **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** The Monitoring and Evaluation component of the proposal should outline in detail how the proposal's activities will advance the program's goals and objectives. This should include any outcomes showing a change in knowledge, awareness, and attitudes; improved quality of services; increased capacity at a school, group; etc. Proposals should also include how the grantee will measure the impact of planned activities.
9. **Budget Justification Narrative:** Applicants must submit a detailed budget and budget narrative justification utilizing the template provided. Line-item expenditures should be listed in the greatest possible detail. Budgets shall be submitted in U.S. dollars and final grant agreements will be conducted in U.S. dollars.

Budget Restrictions: AEIF 2024 does not support the following activities or costs, and the selection committee will deem applications involving any of these activities or costs ineligible:

- Any airfare to/from the United States and its territories

- Activities that take place in the United States and its territories
- Staff salaries, office space, and overhead/operational expenses
- Large items of durable equipment or construction programs
- Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments, or entertainment
- Academic or scientific research
- Charitable or development activities
- Provision of direct social services to a population
- Individual scholarships
- Social travel/visits
- Gifts or prizes
- Duplication of existing programs
- Institutional development of an organization
- Venture capital, for-profit endeavors, or charging a fee for participation in project
- Support for specific religious activities
- Fund-raising campaigns
- Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation

Required Registrations:

All organizations applying for grants (except individuals) must obtain these registrations. All are free of charge:

- www.SAM.gov registration that will generate a UEI

Any applicant with an exclusion in the System for Award Management (SAM) is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), “Debarment and Suspension.”

The Unique Entity Identifier (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. SAM.gov is the Federal government's primary database for complying with FFATA reporting requirements. OMB designated SAM.gov as the central repository to facilitate applicant and recipient use of a single public website that consolidates data on all federal financial assistance. Under the law, it is mandatory to register in SAM.gov.

Starting April 2022, the UEI will be assigned when an organization registers or renews its registration in SAM.gov at www.SAM.gov. To access SAM.gov, an organization is required to have a Login.gov account. Organization can create an account at <https://login.gov/>. www.sam.gov requires all entities to renew their registration once a year in order to maintain an active registration status in SAM.gov. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure it has an active registration in SAM.gov.

If an organization plans to issue a sub-contract or sub-award, those sub-awardees must also have a unique entity identifier (UEI number). Those entities can register for a UEI only at SAM.gov.

If an organization does not have an active registration in SAM.gov prior to submitting an application, the application will be deemed **ineligible**. All organizations applying for grants (except individuals) must obtain these registrations, the latter are free of charge.

Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required.

10. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than January 31, 2024.

E. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Evaluation Criteria: The U.S. Embassy or Consulate Public Diplomacy Sections will use the criteria outlined below to evaluate all applications. The proposals will be reviewed by a Selection Committee made up of regional and exchange program experts located at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. Panelists will use the criteria below to review and evaluate applications.

Relevance to Application Theme

The proposal provides sufficient information on how the activities will support the theme(s) of the competition. The narrative explains any relevant local context the D.C. Selection Committee may not be aware of in relation to this project. Proposed project ideas must be public diplomacy in nature (i.e. not development or military).

Purpose and Summary, Description, and Implementation Plan

When developing the purpose, summary, description, and implementation plan, applicants should aim to make all descriptions clear, concise, and compelling. Reviewers will judge the proposals based on the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the community where it is undertaken. Does the project address an important gap of understanding or need? If the aim of the project is achieved, how will existing knowledge or practice be improved? What audience do the applicants hope to reach with this project? How many will participate? How will they be selected?

Degree of Alumni Involvement

Projects must include the involvement of at least two (2) exchange alumni. They may be the project team leaders or collaborate directly with the Public Diplomacy Section in formulating the project. More than two alumni may comprise the team, however, the minimum is two. As the team leaders, the alumni must be closely involved in project planning, implementation, etc. Applicants should ensure that the proposal includes the following information for each alumni team member: first name, last name, e-mail address, exchange program, country of citizenship, and roles and responsibilities.

Participation and Support from Local Partners

The proposal demonstrates buy-in and support from the community where the project will take place. Local partner involvement is a strong sign that there is community support and that the project will engage a broad array of experts, such as subject matter experts, community centers, academic institutions, businesses, local/national government, non-governmental organizations, American Spaces, etc.

Evaluation and Impact of the Project

A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan is pivotal to project implementation and important tracking progress towards the project's objectives and goals. An M&E plan should consider the data needed to effectively monitor progress toward specific outputs and outcomes as well as how that data collection will be accomplished. Well-crafted indicators should be used to understand a program's progress toward the desired results. An M&E plan should be reviewed for the following:

- Completion
- Applicability and logic of objectives and indicators
- Clear approach to monitoring
- Adherence to SMART criteria
- Feasibility of baselines and targets
- Data quality plan
- Capacity to implement plan

Communication, Media, and Outreach Plan

The project should include a clear plan and timeline for how and when the team will share information about the project. It is important to ensure that the U.S. Mission gets recognition throughout the process, if circumstances permit.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)

Proposals should be public service-oriented and demonstrate how the program will support and advance DEIA principles, and where applicable, engage underserved communities in program administration, design, and implementation.

Budget and Budget Narrative

The budget and narrative justification are sufficiently detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities. The results and proposed outcomes justify the total cost of the project. Budget items are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

Disclaimer: This notice is subject to availability of funding. U.S. Mission Iraq does not guarantee availability of funding by receiving applications under this announcement. Only successful applicants will be contacted.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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

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

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

1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 600, Certifications and Assurances, and the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, all of which are available at: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>. Note the U.S Flag branding and marking requirements in the Standard Terms and Conditions.

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

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

Questions about the grant application process should be directed to: Baghdadpdgrants@state.gov.