Notice of Funding Opportunity

U.S. Department of State
U.S. Embassy Tashkent
Notice of Funding Opportunity

Program Office: Public Diplomacy Section, U.S. Embassy, Tashkent
Funding Opportunity Title: 2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF 2024)

Announcement Type: Grant, Fixed Amount Award or Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: TASHKENT-PDS-FY24-001

Deadline for Applications: January 28, 2024 (11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern time)

Assistance Listing Number: 19.022 – Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)

Total Amount Available: $35,000

The Embassy of the United States in Tashkent 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 Tashkent-Alumni@state.gov by 6 PM (Uzbekistan time) on January 28, 2024.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

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.

AEIF grants support alumni team initiatives that increase regional and global collaboration of alumni, support U.S. foreign policy objectives, and benefit local communities. In 2022, we had a winning project from Uzbekistan. The project was designed to educate agricultural specialists in 15 remote districts of Karakalpakstan on climate-smart agriculture using up-to-date knowledge and innovative tools.

PROGRAM GOAL: Increase the capacity of USG exchange alumni to implement public service projects that support priority themes such as:

- Advancement of gender equity and equality, and women's economic empowerment
- Promotion of disability rights, inclusive education, and participation of people with disabilities in society
- Countering violent extremism and radicalization among youth in rural areas in Uzbekistan

The Embassy will accept public service projects proposed and managed by teams of at least two (2) alumni.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

1. Objective 1: Strengthen leadership and practical skills of USG alumni to lead their own community projects addressing priority themes listed above.
2. Objective 2: Facilitate development of a USG exchange alumni network in Uzbekistan.
3. Objective 3: Increase collaboration between Uzbekistani USG exchange alumni on common interests and issues.

FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Announcement posted: U.S. Embassy Tashkent
Closing date for applications: January 28, 2024
Funding type: Grant, fixed amount award (FAA), or cooperative agreement
Award amounts: $5,000 to $35,000

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant, fixed amount award (FAA), or cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements and some FAAs are different from grants in that bureau/embassy staff are more actively involved in the grant implementation ("Substantial Involvement"); for example, if a cooperative agreement is used, the Embassy will be involved in the selection of participants, review of proposed publications, or more.

Program Performance Period: Proposed projects should start in September 2024 and be completed by September 30, 2025.

Support for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA): All programs should consider strategies for expanding the pool of individuals/organizations/beneficiaries to afford opportunities for as diverse and inclusive population as is feasible to bring diverse perspectives

based on religion, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, national origin, and age to implementation of the program.

The Public Diplomacy Section reserves the right to award less or more than the funds described under circumstances deemed to be in the best interest of the U.S. government, pending the availability of funds and approval of the designated grants officer.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The following individuals are eligible to apply:

- Applicants must be alumni of a U.S. government-funded or sponsored exchange program or a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program (https://j1visa.state.gov/).
- Projects 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. No other organizations are eligible to apply. Exchange alumni can partner with not-for-profit or non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions to implement project activities. The grant can be issued to the individual alumni or the partner organization.
- For-profit entities, even those that may fall into the categories listed above, are **not** eligible to apply for this NOFO.

Cost Sharing or Matching

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

Other Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov.

Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

FUNDING 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.

Content and Form of Application Submission

Applications and budgets must be submitted using the **official AEIF 2024 proposal form (Attachment 1)** and **budget form (Attachment 2)**.

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

Content of Application
Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity.
- The proposal addresses all questions in the official AEIF 2024 application form.
- The budget is in U.S. dollars and is submitted using the designated AEIF 2024 budget form.
- All documents are in English.
- All pages are numbered.

The following documents and information are **required**:

1. **Mandatory application forms**
    - **SF-424** (Application for Federal Assistance – for organizations) or **SF-424-I** (Application for Federal Assistance – for individuals) **Attachment 3 and Attachment 4**
    - **SF424A** (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs) **Attachment 5**
    - **SF424B** (Assurances for Non-Construction programs)

Note: the SF-424B is only required for individuals and for organizations not registered in SAM.gov. **Attachment 6**

2. 2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund Proposal Form

1. **About your Project**: Please provide information on the title of your project, the requested budget total, and the primary location of the project. Projects need to take place outside of the U.S. or its territories.
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. **Problem Statement:** 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 which support the goal/s. Objectives should be specific, measurable, and realistically achievable in 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. **Project Timeline:** A timeline of your project activities**.**
7. **Beneficiaries:** An estimated number of direct and indirect beneficiaries of your proposed project.
8. **Local Project Partners:** A list of partners who will support the proposed project, if applicable.
9. **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.
10. **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.

3. **2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund Budget Form with Budget Narrative:** Applicants must submit a detailed line-item budget and budget justification narrative. Applicants are encouraged to utilize the templates provided with the funding opportunity but are not required to do so. 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.

4. **Attachments:**
   - Official permission letters, if required for program activities
   - Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov) *(NOTE: This section is required and not optional, except for NOFOs targeting applications from individuals instead of organizations)*

Other items NOT required/requested with the application submission, but which *may* be requested if your application is approved to move forward in the review process include:

a. Copies of an organization or program audit within the last two (2) years
b. Copies of relevant human resources, financial, or procurement policies
c. Copies of other relevant organizational policies or documentation that would help the Department determine your organization's capacity to manage a federal grant award overseas.
d. Information to determine what financial controls and standard operating procedures an organization uses to procure goods and services, hire staff and track time and attendance, pay for grant-related travel, and identify other financial transactions that may be necessary to undertake the project activities.
e. The Embassy reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial information regarding the proposal.

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

Required Registration: All organizations applying for grants (except individuals) must obtain a SAM.gov registration as well as a Unique Entity Identifier Number (UEI). Registration through www.SAM.gov is free of charge.

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/. As a reminder, organizations need to renew its sam.gov registration annually.

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 could be deemed **ineligible.** All organizations applying for grants (except individuals) must obtain these registrations, the latter are free of charge.

Please note: 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."

Application Submission Process: There are two application submissions methods available to applicants. Applicants may submit their application using Submission Method A **or** Submission Method B outlined below**.**

- **Submission Method A**: Submitting all application materials directly to the following email address: Tashkent-Alumni@state.gov. Applicants opting to submit applications via email to Tashkent-Alumni@state.gov **must** include the Funding Opportunity Title and Funding Opportunity Number in the subject line of the email.
- **Submission Method B**: Submitting all application materials through Grants.gov. For those opting to apply through Grants.gov, thorough instructions on the application process are available at http://www.grants.gov. For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or go to https://www.grants.gov/support.html.

Submission Deadline: All applications must be received on **January 28, 2024 by 11:59 ET.** For the purposes of determining if an award is submitted on time, PDS will utilize the timestamp provided by Grants.gov. This deadline is firm and is not a rolling deadline. If organizations fail to meet the deadline noted above their application will be considered ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Criteria:

Each application will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below.

Relevance to Application Theme - 20 points 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 - 20 points 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 - 15 points Projects must include the involvement of at least two (2) exchange alumni. They may be the project team leaders or collaborate directly with PAS 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 - 5 points 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 - 10 points A monitoring & 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 - 5 points 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. Embassy gets recognition throughout the process, if circumstances permit.
Budget and Budget Narrative - 15 points 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.

Review and Selection Process

The U.S. embassy or consulate Public Diplomacy Sections will use the criteria outlined above to evaluate all applications.

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Venue Costs: Calculate costs for renting space for project-related activities such as workshops or other training activities. Consider looking for donated space first. If donated space is not possible, costs should be reasonable based on the local environment. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Promotional Items and Advertising: These items aim to amplify your project. All requests should be reasonable and relevant to the project. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Meals and Beverage: Include reasonable costs for snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and meals if essential to the project. Break down meals by the cost per person per meal.

All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Speaker/Consultant/Training Fees: Speaker: Maximum of $250 per day for full programming. Trainer: Maximum of $250 per day or $25 per hour. Consider asking fellow Alumni with expertise to cost-share speaker/training fees. Consultant: A reasonable consultant fee may be included by Alumni for project management and oversight. However, consider cost-sharing as the AEIF cannot provide salary type expenses. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Lodging and Per Diem: List per diem rates and hotel costs which directly support the implementation of the project and indicate single or double occupancy. Per diem rates should be calculated according to the U.S. government allowable rates or be adjusted to local prices if appropriate. Please consult with your U.S. Embassy/Consulate. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Travel: If the program involves travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel. Estimate the costs of travel for this project, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. Costs can include in-country and intraregional air fare or local travel costs required for the actual implementation of the project. Travel between the U.S. and project country is not supported. The AEIF does not support travel in business class or higher. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Supplies, Materials, Equipment: Include general office supplies, computer software, consumable automotive supplies (i.e. fuel), small equipment such as laptops, projector, etc., and expendable materials (i.e. paper, paint). Rent equipment rather than purchase if it is more cost-efficient. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Other: Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. Commonly cited items are administrative and accounting costs, shipping costs for materials and equipment, and monitoring and evaluation. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

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

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