

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity

(NOFO): FY2015 EducationUSA Leadership Institutes

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAAS-15-008

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.432

Key Date/Application Deadline: May 29, 2015

Program Description/Executive Summary:

The Office of Global Educational Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), U.S. Department of State, invites proposal submissions for a cooperative agreement of up to \$500,000 to administer the FY 2015 **EducationUSA Leadership Institutes**.

EducationUSA, located within the Office of Global Educational Programs, works with students in 170 countries around the world to promote U.S. higher education. Advising staff at over 400 EducationUSA centers provide accurate, comprehensive, and current information about the diversity of U.S. higher education opportunities, guiding students to find their best academic fit. EducationUSA advising centers also assist U.S. institutions of higher education in their overseas enrollment outreach and provide information on the complex U.S. higher education system to foreign governments and institutions. This NOFO is aimed at building greater knowledge on key issues within U.S. higher education among select foreign university and government representatives so as to further the EducationUSA mission of promoting U.S. higher education abroad.

A single **award recipient** selected through this NOFO will implement the EducationUSA Leadership Institutes, which are designed for 45 mid- to upper-level foreign college or university administrators, Ministry of Education or other government officials, and/or other qualified participants. Participants for each institute will be nominated by Public Affairs Sections at U.S. Embassies and Consulates and selected for participation through an internal ECA process.

Three institute cohorts of approximately 15 participants each will participate in intensive, short-term academic programs to deepen their understanding of U.S. higher education, develop tools to build capacity within their own systems, and engage with the U.S. higher education sector in effective, sustained ways. The institutes will be approximately two weeks in length with the U.S. Academic Residency and Closing Program taking place simultaneously around February 1 – February 16, 2016, preceded by a virtual pre-departure component and followed by four months of virtual follow-on programming (final dates to be decided in consultation with ECA). The recipient will be responsible for competitively selecting each of three subrecipients to host the three Institutes. U.S. higher education institution or organization **subrecipients** will host the three Institutes and focus on one of three pre-determined topics. Note: ECA reserves the right to increase or decrease the number of institutes, number of participants, and funding amounts as well as change dates of institutes as well as the topics covered by institutes based on U.S. foreign policy priorities and the general needs of the program.

Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions may be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

A. Program Description: 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.

ECA will determine Institute topics in advance and reserves the right to change institute topics prior to the call for subrecipients. Past Institute topics include: Quality Assurance and Accreditation, Industry Private Sector Linkages and Innovation, and Campus Internationalization: Institutional Structures to Support Inbound and Outbound Student Mobility.

Each EducationUSA Leadership Institute will be composed of the following components:

1. **Virtual Training Component: Pre-Departure**
The award recipient will facilitate a pre-departure virtual training for Institute participants beginning four to eight weeks before their departure for the United States. The curriculum for this virtual training component will provide context on the Institute topic and provide preparatory and supplemental knowledge in the form of informational webinars, assignments, readings, and/or other activities. Participants will also be encouraged to begin formulating individual goals and plans for how they will apply these skills and experiences after returning home. Participants will receive a minimum of two virtual training activities.
2. **Virtual Orientation**
The award recipient will conduct a virtual orientation and overview of U.S. higher education, which will be developed in coordination with ECA and the three subrecipients to be identified in Fall 2015. Participants will receive additional information on the content and logistical aspects of the Academic Residency component of each Institute, an introduction to the host campuses, and an overview of the U.S. Department of State's education diplomacy initiatives.
3. **Academic Residency Component**

The central component of each Institute is the 12-day U.S.-based Academic Residency component, to be facilitated by each of the three subrecipients. The Academic Residency component will constitute a specially-designed and well-integrated U.S.-based professional development experience focused on one of the three themes. The Academic Residency may include activities such as: panel discussions; meetings with key education experts, officials and stakeholders; job shadowing; strategic planning discussions; site visits to U.S. higher education institutions or other relevant organizations; and other interactive activities that contribute to achieving the learning outcomes identified collaboratively by ECA, the award recipient, and the subrecipients. Cultural enrichment and community engagement opportunities should also be included in the Academic Residency.

Early in the program, participants should have a formal opportunity to present or discuss self-identified academic/institutional issues, goals, and challenges in their home country and how they would like to utilize the knowledge and experience they will gain during the Institute when they return home. The academic residency component will provide participants with further insight into the decentralized nature, complexity, diversity, and other key attributes of the U.S. higher education sector, especially as these areas relate to potential increased international collaboration and institutional capacity building related to their specific institute topic.

Upon the completion of the Academic Residency, participants will depart for Washington, D.C.

4. Closing Program in Washington, D.C.
The Closing Program will include briefings by professionals from relevant U.S. government agencies, public and private organizations, and other members of the U.S. higher education community. The role of higher education associations and other actors in the field should also be explained. The award recipient should organize activities that encourage each group of Institute participants to summarize their program activities and share the content that they have learned during their academic residencies between and among the members of all three Institute cohorts. Academic Directors should be prepared to be present for relevant sessions as part of the closing program as deemed necessary by ECA. The award recipient will also debrief participants, prepare them for their return home, and discuss participants' future follow-on activities. ECA will create a completion certificate for program participants. ECA will identify a U.S. Department of State official as keynote speaker for the closing program and will work closely with the award recipient to develop closing program content. The proposed closing program agenda should be presented to ECA for approval at least one month before the Leadership Institutes are scheduled to begin.
5. Virtual Follow-on

The Institute will be complemented by four months of virtual follow-on activities. This component will serve as a virtual consultancy which will help the participants integrate the knowledge and experience they have acquired into their work in their home countries, as well as reinforce the professional network among participants.

6. Follow-on Funding Opportunities

Approximately 10% of the total award should be reserved for mini-grants of up to \$10,000 for which participants can apply to support additional programming in their home countries. These funding opportunities are designed to further develop the relationships and institutional linkages established between foreign participants and subrecipients during the Institute.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

In collaboration with ECA, the recipient will create a monitoring and evaluation plan to assess participant and subrecipient satisfaction and learning throughout the course of the entire Institute, including pre-departure virtual training, Academic Residency, Washington, D.C.-based Closing Program, follow-on virtual training, and any additional follow-on opportunities. Evaluation should measure participants' expectations vs. their experience and knowledge gained, and what sustained impact is expected of the program.

Purpose: ECA designed the EducationUSA Leadership Institutes to facilitate opportunities for knowledge exchange among participants, representatives of the U.S. higher education community, and State Department officials, and to build capacity and knowledge. The Institutes will increase participants' understanding of U.S. higher education and their expertise on a specific topic in the field of international higher education as well as build capacity among U.S. educational institutions and associations to collaborate with foreign counterparts.

While the topic will vary, the main programmatic components, overall quality, and initiative objectives will be the same for each Institute. Each subrecipient must demonstrate the capacity and expertise to facilitate a Leadership Institute by proposing an insightful curriculum, a detailed plan for relevant site visits, and an enriching cultural program.

Each Institute will require at least one U.S. subject matter expert or **academic director**, to be identified by the subrecipient. This academic director must possess extensive knowledge and experience in the specific Institute topic and will serve as primary programmatic leader. In addition, an **administrative director** or **coordinator** should be identified by the subrecipient to oversee program development and implementation along with all program support services, including budgetary, logistical, and other administrative arrangements, for each institute. Other staff may be designated as appropriate.

The award recipient, along with the subrecipients, should provide participants with virtual pre-departure orientation sessions (a minimum of two per Institute cohort) with a concise overview of the Institute program, including its principal objectives and major themes; logistical details and program expectations such as health, safety and housing information; and general information about U.S. higher education, culture, and society. The pre-departure orientation should address the administrative details of the program, identify campus and local resources, and provide general information that will facilitate participants' adjustment to daily life in a new cultural environment. Important topics will be security, medical care, and the availability of foods to which participants are accustomed or which meet specific dietary requirements. The award recipient will present all orientation plans to ECA for approval at least one month before the pre-departure virtual orientation is scheduled to begin.

The virtual pre-departure components of the program should also introduce participants to the academic disciplines most germane to the Institutes' themes, survey the major schools of thought and interpretation, and examine current debates within the disciplines through assigned reading and virtual engagement. Participants should also receive a thorough briefing on U.S. higher education, including its history, structure, and approach to internationalization with an emphasis on unique characteristics such as the decentralization and diversity of the U.S. higher education sector. The award recipient should work closely with the subrecipient academic directors to develop appropriate content.

Each subrecipient will host a cohort of approximately 15 people for 12 days of Academic Residency and will provide an on-site orientation to review not only the academic agenda, but also an overview of available amenities and services.

After the Academic Residency, the award recipient will organize a collaborative, three-day closing program for all participants in Washington, D.C. Professionals from relevant U.S. government agencies, public and private organizations, and other members of the U.S. higher education community will provide briefings, facilitate discussion, and anchor activities that allow participants to share their Institute experiences. The role of higher education associations and other actors in the field should also be explored. The award recipient will organize activities that encourage each group of Institute participants to summarize their program activities and share the content that they have learned during their Academic Residencies between and among the members of all three Institute cohorts. The award recipient will also debrief participants, prepare them for their return home, and discuss participants' follow-on activities. The recipient will share the proposed Closing Program agenda with ECA for approval at least one month before the start of the Leadership Institutes.

In a cooperative agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. ECA activities and responsibilities for this program are as follows:

- ECA, along with Regional Bureaus and U.S. Embassies, will manage the participant nomination and selection process.

- ECA will determine Institute topics and reserves the right to change Institute topics prior to the open call for subrecipients.
- ECA will approve the text of all program announcements, including the open call for subrecipient proposals and any related press releases. ECA will be consulted on any proposed engagement with the media regarding the program.
- ECA will review the recipient's recommendations and approve the final selection of subrecipients. .
- ECA, along with the award recipient, will monitor program development for quality and consistency across Leadership Institutes, observe virtual orientations, participate in planning and execution of the Closing Program, and conduct site visits where possible. ECA will be consulted on any serious programmatic or participant issue.
- ECA will review quarterly reports for adherence to the budget and stated programmatic goals.

The responsibilities of the award recipient are as follows:

- Developing an overarching program agenda for the programming and implementation of a set of three EducationUSA Leadership Institutes to take place concurrently.
- Launching an open call for subrecipient applications to host each of the three separate institutes, reviewing applications, and making subrecipient award recommendations to ECA.
- Managing selection for and awarding of sub-grants to each of the three sub-recipients and coordinating related programming and logistics.
- Managing the round-trip international travel logistics between their home cities and respective institute sites for all international participants across the three institutes.
- Providing all relevant U.S. visa support for international participants, including issuing of DS-2019 forms.
- Ensuring proper levels and quality of staffing and supervision.
- Overseeing the development of curriculum and programming, including site visits and on-site orientations for each subrecipient institute.
- Ensuring that subrecipients provide participants with a quality of housing that is equivalent to what mid- to upper-level U.S. campus administrators and government officials would regard as acceptable accommodations were they to spend extended time on campus as guests of the university. Housing may be in faculty residences, hotels, or other suitable locations. Each participant should have a private bedroom and bath during the residency portion. Accommodations should respect each participant's privacy and comfort, and be conducive to work and relaxation.
- Ensuring that subrecipients provide participants with access to kitchen facilities or have the option to eat at local restaurants. In many cases, participants may have religious or other dietary restrictions. Institute staff should consider conducting a pre-survey of participant dietary and/or religious needs in order to best

accommodate those needs. Providing adequate budgetary oversight and financial management of the overall project, including transferring of funds to each of the three sub-recipients.

- Developing, with subrecipients, virtual pre-departure orientation sessions for participants and presenting all orientation plans to ECA for approval at least one month before the pre-departure virtual orientation is scheduled to begin.
- Organizing a collaborative, three-day closing program for all participants in Washington, D.C., sharing the proposed agenda with ECA for approval at least one month before the start of the Leadership Institutes. Setting up and implementing an evaluation mechanism for each sub-recipient institute and of the overall project, to include feedback from international participants and sub-recipient institutions.
- Informing ECA about the administration of the program including immediate notification of any problems, emergencies, or other issues with participants, including progress of necessary corrective action.
- Submitting all required and ad hoc reporting in a complete and timely manner.

Application Requirements:

- Personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program's goals. The award recipient will serve as the primary point of contact for the three selected subrecipients during the design stage and administration of the EducationUSA Leadership Institutes. Note: The award recipient should be familiar with OMB Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600 and responsibilities involving subrecipients.
- Award applicants should submit a proposal which outlines their role in the administration of the EducationUSA Leadership Institutes, establishes standards of programmatic quality, and provides a monitoring and evaluation plan for the initiative.
- The award recipient should demonstrate the capacity to draw upon the content expertise of the broader U.S. higher education community to conduct an open and transparent competition for subrecipients to coordinate each of the individual Institutes. Subrecipients should reflect the diversity of institutional types in the U.S. higher education sphere. Eligible subrecipients will be selected from the applicant pool of appropriate higher education associations, accredited U.S. colleges or universities, and/or other relevant organizations with the knowledge and capacity to successfully engage with foreign higher education representatives in sustained collaboration. The most qualified type of subrecipient may vary depending on the area of focus of the two-week academic residency component of each individual Institute.
- The award recipient should outline the process and procedures for assessment and selection of subrecipients through this solicitation and allocate funds in the budget for the administration of this open competition. Each subrecipient should exhibit both a depth of knowledge in the primary topic of engagement as well as networks with other key stakeholders in the field.

B. Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY2015

Approximate Total Funding: \$500,000. This figure represents a period of performance beginning August 1, 2015 and ending September 30, 2016.

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Approximate Average Award: \$500,000

Floor of Award Range: None

Ceiling of Award Range: \$500,000

Anticipated Award Date: August 1, 2015

Anticipated Project Completion Date: September 30, 2016. This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award.

Additional Information:

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

C.) Eligibility Information:

C.1. Eligible applicants: Applications may be submitted by U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau 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 Circular 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 will be reduced in like proportion.

C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

a.) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award, in an amount of up to \$500,000, to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program.

Therefore, organizations with less than four years' experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

b.) **Technical Eligibility:** All proposals must comply with the following or they will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

- Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition. If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. **Please note:** Applicants are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

D.) Application and Submission Information:

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

D.1 Contact Information to Request an Application Package:

Please contact the Educational Information and Resources Branch, ECA/A/S/A, SA-5, 4X17, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, telephone: 202-632-9463, fax number: 202-632-9479 and email address: ButtoJ@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation.

Please specify Bureau Program Officer Jarred Butto and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Please read all information before downloading.

D.2a. **Content and Form of Submission:** Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.3p. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

D.3a. You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package.

D.3b. All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package which contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

D.3c. All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations 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 have been completed. 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. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

D.3d. You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 1) Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

D.3e. In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one-page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and

Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

D.3f. If your organization is a private nonprofit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

D.3g. **All ECA awards recipient organizations** must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing www.GrantSolutions.gov. To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click "Getting Started-Request a User Account" at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday and can be reached at help@grantsolutions.gov or 1-866-577-0771.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

D.3h. **ADHERENCE TO ALL REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE J VISA**

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

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

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

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
 U.S. Department of State
 SA-44, Suite 668
 301 4th Street, SW
 Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support of Diversity' section of this document as well as the DIVERSITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

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.

D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project's objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame),

the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
3. **Participant behavior**, concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
4. **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

Please note: Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

D.3k. Virtual Exchange Component: ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain

engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly 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), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, 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, including our International Exchange Alumni space. 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.

D.3l. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients: All ECA Grant Recipients must adhere to the requirements in ECA's Communications Guidance on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

D.3m. Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

D.3n. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. ***Budget requests may not exceed \$500,000.*** There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Note, \$500,000 will be used to establish, administer, implement and monitor the EducationUSA Leadership Institutes.

D.3o. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

(1) Administrative Costs. Costs necessary for the effective administration of the program may include salaries for grantee organization employees, fringe benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the Application Package.

(2) Participant international travel, lodging and per diem during the Academic Residency and closing program. Organizations should use the published Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>. ECA requests applicants to budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed Federal per diem rates. Foreign per diem rates can be accessed at:

http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id.

(3) Health Insurance for participants. Participants will NOT be covered during their participation in the program by the ECA-sponsored Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE), therefore the award recipient must offer and require that participants register for health insurance plans as part of their comprehensive program packages. Health insurance plans must include catastrophic coverage, including evacuation and repatriation benefits.

(4) Office costs. Costs related to communication with participants (mail/shipping, telephone, etc.), wire transfers, printing and general administration.

(5) In-country Travel. Costs for visa processing purposes. Given the requirements associated with obtaining J-1 visas for ECA-supported participants, applicants should include costs for any travel associated with visa interviews or DS- 2019 pick-up for scholarship students.

(6) Other costs as appropriate.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

D.3p. Application Deadline and Method of Submission:

Application Deadline Date: Friday, May 29, 2015

Method of Submission: Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the “Find” portion of the system.

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

Please follow the instructions available in the ‘Get Started’ portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

Several of the steps in the Grants.gov registration process could take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

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 "For Applicants" 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.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission 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

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.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 midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal 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.

D.3q. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

- 1. Quality of the program idea:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission.
- 2. Program planning:** Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.
- 3. Ability to achieve program objectives:** Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the organization/institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
- 4. Multiplier effect/impact:** Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.
- 5. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation, including individual grantee/participant recruitment, selection and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.
- 6. Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals.
- 7. Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
- 8. Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) ensuring that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.
- 9. Project Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.
- 10. Cost-effectiveness:** The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.
- 11. Cost-sharing:** Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

F.) Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Award Notices:

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive an Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. 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 an authorized Grants Officer, and mailed to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

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

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

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact Jarred Butto at ButtoJ@state.gov for additional information.

F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following:

Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars).

For a copy of the OMB circular cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>.
<https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>

F.3. Reporting Requirements: You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

Mandatory:

- 1.) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be

determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). The first page of the Performance Progress Report form (SF-PPR) must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here:

http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68. The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at:

<http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [GrantSolutions.gov](http://Grantsolutions.gov), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.

- 2.) A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all program performance reports.
- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 4.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D. Application and Submission Instructions above for Program Monitoring and Evaluation information.)

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

F.4. 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 the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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 work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Jarred Butto, U.S. Department of State, Educational Information and Resources Branch, Office of Global Educational Programs, ECA/A/S/A, SA-5, 4-X17, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, Phone: 202-632-6190, Fax: 202-632-9479, E-Mail: ButtoJ@state.gov.

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this NOFO 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 NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

H. Other Information:

Notice:

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section F3. Reporting Requirements above.

Evan Ryan
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

March 30, 2015

