

Department of State

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

(NOFO): FY 2020 Study of the U.S. Institutes for Scholars

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0006158

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.401

Application Deadline: October 28, 2019

Executive Summary: The Study of the U. S. Branch (ECA/A/E/USS), Office of Academic Exchange Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), invites proposal submissions from accredited U.S. post-secondary education institutions (community colleges, liberal arts colleges, public and private universities) and other U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) (see section C. Eligibility Information) to design and implement two (2) Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSIs) for Scholars, pending the availability of FY 2020 funds.

Each Study of the U.S. Institute will be six weeks in duration, including an approximately four-week academic residency at an academic institution and up to two weeks of an integrated educational study tour. The academic residency should take place on a U.S. university or college campus and should include academic coursework, diverse speakers, time for personal research, and opportunities for interaction with American peers. The study tour should take scholars to another region of the United States and it should complement the academic residency. The programs should conclude in Washington, DC with a minimum stay of two days.

The Institutes should be designed for groups of 18 foreign university-level faculty or professionals, focusing on the themes of 1) Religious Freedom and Pluralism and 2) U.S. Economics and Business. See details in section A.2. Institute Themes, as well as, A.3. Program Administration and A.4. Participants.

The recipient will be responsible for planning and implementing the program including the oversight and coordination of both Institutes and the oversight and management of performance of sub-award recipient(s) under the award. Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process. The awarding of a Cooperative Agreement for these programs is contingent upon the availability of FY 2020 funds. The awarding of the non-competitive continuation in FY 2021 is contingent on the availability of funding and successful performance.

ECA intends to award one (1) Cooperative Agreement (one base year plus one non-competitive continuation) for an estimated total amount of \$1,750,000, pending the availability of funds. Please see section B. Federal Award Information below for additional details. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets, participant numbers, program themes, and the number of Institutes based on program needs and the availability of U.S. government funding.

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.

A.1. Purpose:

Study of the U.S. Institutes for Scholars are intensive academic programs whose purpose is to provide foreign university faculty and other professionals the opportunity to deepen their positive understanding of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions, broadly defined. The ultimate goal is to advance American foreign policy by promoting American prosperity and advancing American influence as outlined in the National Security Strategy. The Institutes will also enable participants to strengthen curricula and to improve the quality of teaching about the United States in academic institutions abroad.

These two Institutes – one on Religious Freedom and Pluralism and one on U.S. Economics and Business – should be six weeks in length. Participants should spend a minimum of four weeks at the host institution and up to two weeks on an educational study tour, including at least two days in Washington, DC at the conclusion of the Institute. The educational travel component for all programs should directly complement the academic programs and should include visits to cities and other sites of interest in the region around the host institution as well as to another geographic region of the United States.

The academic program should include lectures, panels, seminar discussions, scholarly research presentations, academic and experiential learning activities that focus on the theme and include debates and, if possible, a scholar symposium where participants could make a presentation about their personal research. All Institutes should include a balance of speakers and perspectives throughout the program schedule including diverse demographic, political, and geographic U.S. viewpoints.

Once participants return home, the program should include opportunities for continued follow-on engagement with their fellow SUSI scholar alumni. Activities could include, but are not limited to, small grants, webinars, workshops, collaborative publications, or other ways to continue building on the six-week SUSI experience.

Both programs should foster ECA's mission to promote mutual understanding between citizens of the United States and other countries. Thus, the programs should include robust opportunities for participants to meet Americans from a variety of backgrounds, to interact with their U.S. peers, and to speak to appropriate student and civic groups about their experiences and life in their home countries. **Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document for more information.**

A.2. Institute Themes:

Both Institutes should aim to increase participants' knowledge of American life in order to enhance their professional knowledge and scholarship and to improve courses they may teach on the United States in universities and other educational, training, and research institutions abroad. All Institutes should include a balance of speakers and perspectives throughout the program schedule including diverse demographic, political, and geographic U.S. viewpoints.

a) The **Institute on Religious Freedom and Pluralism** should provide a multinational group of up to 18 experienced foreign university faculty, scholars, researchers and religious leaders with a deeper understanding of U.S. society and culture, past and present, through an examination of religious freedom as a foundational American value. The program should include a survey of the religious landscape of the United States, including major and minor religious groups; historic religious traditions and contemporary American religious groups should also be included. The Institute should explore both the historical and contemporary relationship between church and state in the United States; examine interfaith understanding and dialogue, religious pluralism, freedom of religion as a fundamental unalienable human right and source of stability; and discuss ways in which religious freedom should be protected. Also, the Institute should examine the intersections of religion and politics in the United States, especially in U.S. foreign policy. Discussions of the Potomac Declaration on Religious Freedom and the Potomac Plan of Action to protect religious freedom and diversity around the world should be included. Participants should have opportunities to meet with U.S. community leaders of different faiths who advocate for collaboration and tolerance among religious groups. This Institute will take place in the summer of 2020 and should start no earlier than June 1, 2020.

b) The **Institute on U.S. Economics and Business** should provide a multinational group of 18 experienced foreign university faculty, researchers, experts and policymakers with a deeper understanding of key components and structures of the U.S. economy as the world's largest economy. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the program should explore 1) how financial institutions, investors, and businesses interact to support growth and employment and 2) the institutional backdrop that is required to sustain a competitive and strong private sector, including but not limited to corporate governance structures, monetary policy, and the legal and regulatory framework of the business sector. The program should also discuss how the United States, as the leading nation for global trade, influences industries, free markets and financial sectors around the world and advances trade, investment, and capital flows. Participants should have a firsthand look at key

institutions and stakeholders in U.S. economy and the opportunity to meet with business and corporate leaders, Wall Street executives and board members, and small business owners, among others. A study tour to New York City, including a visit to the New York Stock Exchange, is highly recommended. This Institute will take place in the summer of 2020 and should start no earlier than June 1, 2020.

A.3. Program Administration:

ECA is seeking detailed proposals from accredited post-secondary U.S. higher education institutions (community colleges, liberal arts colleges, public and private universities) and other U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the eligibility requirements outlined under section C. below.

ECA intends to issue one Cooperative Agreement for the administration and implementation of two Institutes. The recipient may propose to: 1) implement one Institute and administer a sub-award to another host institution to conduct the remaining Institute, or 2) issue sub-awards to two institutions with each conducting one Institute.

Each Study of the U.S. Institute should be designed as an intensive, academically rigorous seminar for an experienced group of scholars and professionals from abroad. Institutes should be organized through an integrated series of lectures, readings, seminar discussions, regional travel, and site visits, and should also include sessions that expose participants to U.S. pedagogical philosophy and practice for teaching the respective discipline. Each Institute should also include opportunities for limited independent research and a balance of speakers and perspectives throughout the program schedule including diverse demographic, political, and geographic U.S. viewpoints. All programs should foster ECA's mission to promote mutual understanding between citizens of other countries and citizens of the United States. Thus, the programs should include robust opportunities for participants to meet Americans from a variety of backgrounds and to interact with their U.S. peers. In addition, award recipients must strictly comply with State Department branding and signage requirements, at events, in remarks, on program documentation, and online, in all websites and social media posts. **Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document for more information.**

A.4. Participants:

Participants will be diverse in age, professional position, and travel experience abroad. Participants may or may not have in-depth knowledge of the particular Institute program theme, but all will likely have had exposure to the relevant discipline and some experience teaching about the United States.

Participants will represent all regions of the world and will be fluent or have advanced proficiency in English. Recipients will NOT participate in the selection of participants. U.S. embassies, consulates, and Fulbright commissions will nominate candidates. ECA will make the final participant selections. Every effort will be made to select a gender-

balanced group of participants. A final list of participants will be sent to the award recipient prior to the start of the Institutes. The recipient should provide participants with pre-departure orientation materials at least six weeks prior to the start of the Institutes.

Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document for more information on participants.

A.5. Program Dates:

Pending the availability of FY 2020 funds, the anticipated award date for the Cooperative Agreement will be on or about March 1, 2020. All Institutes should last approximately 43 days (including arrival and departure days). Institutes should begin no sooner than June 1, 2020, and should conclude no later than August 14, 2020.

A.6. Program Guidelines:

The award recipient is responsible for the conception, structure, and monitoring of both Institutes. Proposals must provide a detailed and comprehensive narrative describing objectives of the Institutes; the academic program; planned site visits, and how each session relates to the overall Institute theme. Proposals must include syllabi for each program indicating the title, scope, and content of each session; the subject matter for each lecture, panel, discussion, group presentation, or other activity. Syllabi should also confirm or provisionally identify speakers with different viewpoints, panelists, and session leaders, and clearly show how assigned readings will advance the goals of each Institute.

Please see section D. Application and Submission Information for application submission requirements. Proposals will be reviewed on the basis of their responsiveness to the six review criteria listed in this NOFO (See Section E.1.). In addition, the accompanying POGI provides program-specific guidelines that all proposals must address fully.

Please note: In a Cooperative Agreement, the Study of the U.S. Branch (ECA/A/E/USS) is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. The Branch may request that the award recipient make modifications to the academic residencies and/or educational travel components of the program. The award recipient will be required to obtain approval of significant program changes in advance of their implementation. These activities and the roles and responsibilities of the Department and the recipient are outlined in the attached POGI.

Proposal narratives should include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus one additional non-competitive continuation, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base year program, with the understanding that the program design, duration, and participant numbers would be similar when/if the subsequent non-competitive continuation is exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if the non-competitive continuation will be exercised.

Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all non-competitive continuation years.

B. Federal Award Information:

Award Information:

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

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2020-base year, up to \$875,000 pending the availability of funds; FY 2021-non-competitive continuation year one, up to \$875,000, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

Approximate Total Funding (2 years): \$1,750,000. This figure represents base year plus one non-competitive continuation year, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Floor of Award Range: None

Ceiling of Award Range: \$875,000 for FY 2020 base year (or \$1,750,000 for the base year plus one non-competitive continuation year).

Approximate Average Award: \$875,000 for FY 2020 base year (or \$1,750,000 for the base year plus one non-competitive continuation year).

Anticipated Award Date: March 1, 2020, pending the availability of FY 2020 funds.

Anticipated Project Completion Date: September 30, 2022. This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award – one base year plus one non-competitive continuation year.

Additional Information: ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. The Cooperative Agreement will be awarded for a period of 12 months (base year) with a non-competitive continuation for a second period of 18 months to ensure adequate time for post-Institute follow-on activities. ECA will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise a non-competitive continuation at least 90 days in advance of expiration of the current year after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to exercise a non-competitive continuation will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

C. Eligibility Information:

C.1. Eligible applicants: Applications may be submitted by U.S. post-secondary education institutions (community colleges, liberal arts colleges, public and private universities) and other 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, ECA encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

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

C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

a.) Experience in Conducting International Exchange: ECA grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in ECA funding. ECA anticipates making one award to one applicant in an amount up to \$875,000 each year to support program and administrative costs required to implement these exchange programs. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of 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 the proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process. It is ECA's intent to award one (1) Cooperative Agreement to one applicant organization under this competition to implement and administer two Institutes.

c.) 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:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

D. Application and Submission Information:

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, ECA 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: In the event an applicant cannot obtain an electronic application package from Grants.gov, please contact José Marrero, Program Officer, Study of the U.S. Branch, ECA/A/E/USS, SA-5, Fourth Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, MarreroJA@state.gov, 202-632-3337 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.

It also contains the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document, which provides specific information, award criteria, and budget instructions tailored to this competition. Note that a minimum of \$250,000 must go to the sub-awardee to support robust programming, but applicants are encouraged to allocate more. ECA/A/E/USS also provides a sample Institute budget in Microsoft Excel format. You may request that template in editable format by contacting Program Officer José Marrero, MarreroJA@state.gov.

Please specify José Marrero 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 ECA's website at <https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov>.

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

D.3.a. Unique Entity Identifier Number: 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 (Data Universal Numbering System or DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package. For more detailed instructions for obtaining a UEI (DUNS) number, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

D.3.b. Required Proposal Elements: All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget. Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document and the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) for additional formatting and technical requirements.

D.3.c. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM): All federal award applicants must be registered 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. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts. Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>

D.3.d. Non-Profit Status: You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** 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.3.e. FFATA Report: 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.3.f. Verifying Non-Profit Status: 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.3.g. Required Registration with SAMS Domestic: All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic by accessing <https://mygrants.service-now.com> and clicking the "create an account" link. SAMS Domestic is the U.S. Department of State's grants management system and is supported by the Department's Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). Recipient organizations and recipient contacts

and signatories that have previously used SAMS Domestic as a U.S. Department of State award recipient do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact the ILMS Help Desk for help in gaining access.

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

In the event the ILMS Help Desk is unable to provide you with assistance in a timely manner, please contact ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov and copy the program officer associated with the solicitation.

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

D.3.h. 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 Alternate Responsible Officers, 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-4E (Bldg. 3)
2430 E. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.3.i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines: Pursuant to ECA'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, politics, 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,” ECA “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.3.j. 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 award 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**, such as 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.3.k. 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.3.l. 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.3.m. Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

D.3.n. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants must provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification. A minimum of \$250,000 must go to each sub-awardee to support robust programming, but applicants are encouraged to allocate more. It is estimated that one Institute costs approximately \$360,000.

For competitions that will be renewed through a Non-Competitive Continuation applicants must submit:

1. the SF-424A which must include the budget request amount for the base-year of the program;
2. a detailed proposal narrative and budget for the base year of funding (Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instruction Document (PSI) for general budget guidance.) The narrative should also include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus one additional non-competitive continuation year, pending successful program performance and availability of funds; and
3. an abbreviated/estimated summary budget presenting the total projected administrative and program costs for the anticipated total duration of programming (base year, plus one non-competitive continuation year.)

To exercise the Non-Competitive Continuation mechanism, the recipient will be required to submit:

1. timely semi-annual performance and financial reports;
2. a request in writing to ECA at least 90 days in advance of the expiration of the current program year;
3. a summary budget that projects program expenses through the end of the current year;
4. a detailed budget outlining both administrative and program expenses for the requested non-competitive continuation year; and
5. a brief narrative to support the continuation of the award.

The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will:

- 1.) closely monitor the recipient's performance through site visits, desk audits, mandatory semi-annual performance and financial reports, consultations, and other forms of communication and dialogue before exercising additional non-competitive continuations. (Additional details regarding monitoring and oversight of the program by ECA representatives will be provided at the time the base-year award is made.)

- 2.) review and evaluate all mandatory semi-annual program and financial reports;
 - i. All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up-to-date before ECA will exercise additional non-competitive continuations.
 - ii. Any/all concerns, issues, or modifications requested by the Grants Officer or Program Officer to the original program design or method of implementation must be responded to in writing.
 - iii. The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will review and advise of ECA's approval or disapproval of the response before issuing the subsequent non-competitive continuation.

- 3.) Prior Grants Officer approval is required to carry forward an unobligated balance from a prior funding period to the subsequent funding period. If the Grants Officer determines that some or all of the unobligated funds are not necessary to perform the program activity, the Grants Officer may decline the Recipient's request to carry forward the unobligated balance.

The Grants Officer may, at their discretion, use the unobligated balance to reduce or offset future funding for a subsequent funding period. An unobligated balance at the end of a funding period is not sufficient justification to carry forward funds. A final determination and approval to carry forward any funds will be communicated via a cost amendment with adjustment, if any, to new obligation amounts.

- i. The request to carry forward an unobligated balance must include:
 - a. A brief narrative why funds remain unobligated and how the unobligated funds will be used to complete the previously approved goals and objectives of the program; and,
 - b. A detailed budget that reflects the amount of unobligated funds to date, and anticipated expenditures in the subsequent period of performance for all cost categories under the authorized budget.

D.3.o. Allowable Costs: Please refer to section F.2. of this document for information on allowable costs. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

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

Application Deadline Date: Monday, October 28, 2019

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

D.3.q. Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures:

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

D.3.r. How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov: Applicants should read instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

The registration process can take up to four weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines. Applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov. Organization applicants can find complete instructions here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>.

D.3.s. How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov: For access to complete instruction on how to apply for Notice of Funding Opportunities on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>.

D.3.t. Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues: Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission issues to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800-518-4726

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

Email: support@grants.gov

D.3.u. Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission: 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.

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

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

stamp and Grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

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

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

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

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

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

E. Application Review Information:

ECA 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 ECA regulations and guidelines and forwarded to the ECA 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 U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the ECA 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 Program Plan and Ability to Achieve Program Objectives:** Proposals should exhibit originality and clearly demonstrate how the Institutes will meet the objectives laid out in this solicitation. A detailed itinerary and staff work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Activities should be reasonable, feasible, and form a coherent program for participant exploration of the topic. Competitive proposals will clearly promote ECA's mission: to foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries to promote friendly and peaceful relations.
- 2. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of ECA's diversity policy. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity, including a balance of speakers and perspectives throughout the program schedule from diverse demographic, political, and geographic U.S. viewpoints, will be achieved in the different aspects of program design and implementation, and how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity. Proposals should also indicate how reasonable accommodations for participant needs, including disability accommodations, will be implemented.
- 3. Project Evaluation:** As explained in section D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation, proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives are recommended.
- 4. Cost-effectiveness/Cost-sharing:** 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. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support, as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

5. **Institutional Track Record/Capacity:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs (past exchange programs need not have been ECA funded). ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past ECA awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by the ECA Grants Office. ECA will consider the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be fully qualified to achieve the project's goals.
6. **Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should discuss provisions made for follow-up with returned participants as a means of establishing longer-term individual and institutional linkages. Proposals also should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without ECA support) ensuring that ECA supported programs are not isolated events. Please refer to the POGI for additional information on follow-on activities.

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 ECA procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the ECA 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 transmitted 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.

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 Guidance 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 guidance 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/>
<https://www.state.gov/m/a/ope/index.htm>

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; 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 complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's [SAMS Domestic](#). SAMS Domestic is the U.S. Department of State's grants management system, which is replacing GrantSolutions.gov, and is supported by the Department's Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). For assistance, please contact the U.S. Department of State's ILMS Help Desk at 1-888-313-4567 (toll free for U.S. callers) or through the U.S. Department of State's ILMS Self Service Portal at <https://afsitsm.service-now.com/ilms/home>. 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 [SAMS Domestic](#), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Cooperative Agreements/Grants;

In the event you are having difficulty uploading reports and the ILMS help desk is not providing sufficient assistance, please email ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov.

- 2.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 3.) 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; and
- 4.) Because the Competition will allow for the exercise of a non-competitive continuation, applicants will be placed on a semi-annual program and financial reporting cycle. The due dates for these reports will be included in the final assistance award document. The program and financial reports must demonstrate substantial progress by addressing progress towards the original approved goals and objectives, relative activities and events, and supporting fiscal data. The reports will be reviewed by both the assigned Grant Officer and Program Officer. A reporting template is available from the Program Officer to award recipients for guidance.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to ECA in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation.)

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to ECA 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 ECA 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 U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to beginning of the Institutes.

G. Agency Contacts:

For questions about this announcement regarding this competition, contact: Program Officer José Marrero, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Academic Exchange Programs, ECA/A/E/USS, SA-5, 4th Floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, tel: 202-632-3337, and email: MarreroJA@state.gov.

All correspondence with ECA 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, ECA 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 ECA representative. Explanatory information provided by ECA that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section F.3. Reporting Requirements above.

Marie Royce
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

August 28, 2019