

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY15 J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative (Stevens Initiative)

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAPE-15-001

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.415

Key Date/Application Deadline: April 17, 2015

Program Description/Executive Summary:

The J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative (Stevens Initiative), developed in partnership with the Stevens Family, and with significant involvement from the MacArthur Foundation, is a multilateral public-private partnership that will strengthen engagement between young people in the Middle East and North Africa and in the United States as a lasting tribute to the legacy of Ambassador Chris Stevens. The Stevens Initiative will use technology and online tools to achieve the largest-ever increase in people-to-people educational exchanges between the United States and the Middle East and North Africa. For more information on the current work of the Stevens Initiative, please visit: <http://www.stevensinitiative.org>.

In November, 2014, Vice President Biden announced the United States' commitment to the Stevens Initiative and to encouraging a generation of globally-minded youth, when the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative (Stevens Initiative) was launched at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Morocco.

Several governments have pledged to contribute more than \$17,000,000 over the next five years and to work with the J. Christopher Stevens Fund, the MacArthur Foundation and the United States on the Stevens Initiative. In addition, the Stevens Initiative will involve funding and support from foundations and private sector partners.

A Managing Partner is being sought to manage and coordinate all aspects of the Initiative. ECA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for \$4,000,000 to support the initial implementation of the Initiative. With ECA's funds, the award recipient will develop transparent, merit-based competitions for U.S. organizations to administer virtual exchange projects between youth in the United States and the Middle East and North Africa as well as coordinate and report on all activities under the Stevens Initiative brand. The award recipient will also facilitate on-going collaboration among the Stevens Initiative partners and conduct research and evaluations of activities undertaken by the Stevens Initiative. The award recipient will not directly implement exchanges.

Competitive proposals under Review Criterion 3. Institution's Record/Ability and Capacity will include an understanding that there will be numerous private and public stakeholders and funders involved in the Stevens Initiative and will demonstrate an ability to coordinate with all stakeholders. Competitive proposals will also demonstrate

an ability and willingness to work with program stakeholders on future iterations of the Stevens Initiative, including post-federal funding programming.

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.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Given the complexity of the Stevens Initiative, qualified organizations that are interested in applying are strongly encouraged to contact the following State Department Officer before submitting a proposal:

Mr. Brent Beemer
beemerbt@state.gov
(202) 632-6163

A. Program Description:

Overall grant making authority for the U.S. government contribution to this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended (22 U.S.C. § 2451 *et seq.*), 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 U.S. government contribution to program above is provided through legislation.

Purpose:

The introduction of technology into the lives of young people is changing the way they engage with the rest of the world. Increased connectivity is inspiring global citizenship, driving young people to seek connections with peers outside of their local communities, and encouraging them to tackle local and global challenges. Yet virtual connections made in the unmediated space of the Internet — in a chat room or on a blog site — also have the potential to fuel misunderstanding and division, rather than foster mutual respect and cooperation. Developing young people's understanding of other cultures and diverse perspectives, and equipping them with the tools they need to communicate and cooperate with confidence, is critical to ensuring that the power of global connectivity is harnessed for good and lays the foundation for a safer and more secure world.

Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens was known for his uncommon goodwill towards others. Always gracious, fascinated by other cultures, and constantly asking questions, he engaged in open and respectful dialogue with everyone he met. His appreciation for

the differences that make people unique was fueled by his early experiences abroad. Ambassador Stevens studied as a high-school student in Spain, as a college student in Italy, and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco. These experiences shaped his view of the world, fueled his curiosity and respect for others, and earned him the esteem of people everywhere he served. Yet, even though such physical exchange experiences are highly valuable in today's inter-connected world, only a small percentage of young people have the opportunity to participate in them due to limits of time, space, and resources.

The Stevens Initiative — conceived and developed in close partnership with Ambassador Stevens' family and the MacArthur Foundation — was inspired by the meaningful international exchange experiences that Ambassador Stevens had as a young man, which helped to shape the kind of diplomat he became. The Stevens Initiative aims to make similar experiences available to unprecedented numbers of young people in the Middle East and North Africa through programs that connect youth virtually in sustained and meaningful ways.

Program Design

The Stevens Initiative is a collaboration among the J. Christopher Stevens Fund, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the U.S. Department of State, and the Kingdom of Morocco. The Founding Partners bring unique assets and perspectives to the shared goal of working across sectors to harness the power of virtual exchange platforms and Connected Learning to engage global youth with innovative and meaningful programs.

The J. Christopher Stevens Fund, as a champion for virtual exchange, provided seed funding and developed the vision for the Stevens Initiative, and will continue to play a role in the establishment and growth of the Initiative over time. The MacArthur Foundation has provided significant operational support in the early phases of the Initiative, both financial and in-kind, and is advising on a strategy to transition the Stevens Initiative from its infancy into a robust, outcome-oriented platform that is self-sustaining. The MacArthur Foundation will bring its unique network and expertise in Digital Media and Learning to bear in scaling up the Initiative and will advise on cultivating a community of practice grounded in the mutually-reinforcing principles of Connected Learning and Virtual Exchange. The Department of State serves as a critical convener and supporter, through its institutional support of virtual exchange programming – to include the Christopher Stevens Youth Network (CSYN) – and its relationships and experience around the world. The Kingdom of Morocco, the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to pledge support for the Stevens Initiative, has played a significant role in the development of the Initiative, and in the engagement of new government partners. Each of the Founding Partners is expected to contribute substantially to the growth of the Initiative.

In a cooperative agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. These activities and the roles and responsibilities of the Department and the award recipient are detailed in the attached document entitled Project, Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI). In general, the award recipient will be expected to:

- Hire sufficient and appropriately experienced staff to support the implementation, monitoring, and promotion of the Stevens Initiative and of all projects under the Stevens Initiative brand;
- Exercise full financial oversight and provide reporting to all stakeholders;
- Support the programmatic activities of the Stevens Initiative, which includes providing project management and advisory board facilitation. Additionally, the award recipient is expected to:
 - Issue subawards for ECA funds through open competition(s) to support virtual exchange programming that meets program goals and objectives, expands access to new demographics, and works to reduce cost-per-participant; the award recipient will also draft all documents for the U.S.-funded open competition in consultation and with final approval by ECA;
 - Conduct research to form the basis for comparative evaluations across different programming models and impact assessments of new experiments in the field. Any funds awarded by the U.S. government are expected to be expended according to the terms and conditions of the award and applicable federal regulations;
 - Monitor the progress, including fiscal management, of awarded projects with regular reporting of results to ECA;
 - Document and share best practices with all stakeholders;
- In consultation with the Department of State and other stakeholders the award recipient is to work to expand partnerships with the private sector, civil society, academia, and foundations that add value and substance to the Stevens Initiative;
- Design and manage a governance structure that facilitates transparent, on-going collaboration and communication amongst Stevens Initiative stakeholders, and allows for appropriate engagement and oversight by Stevens Initiative founding and contributing partners;
- Develop content for and maintain the Stevens Initiative's website and other associated media and materials. As the managing partner, the award recipient is to conduct communications, outreach, and marketing activities to promote the Stevens Initiative;

Applicants should provide details on how the open competition(s) would be structured and managed to issue subawards with the funds provided by ECA. As this is a new

project, ECA sees value in trying new and innovative exchange models, in addition to utilizing established and proven ones. Strong proposals will outline a plan for finding a productive balance between funding new program models as well as proven and established models. Under Review Criterion 1. Program planning and ability to achieve objectives, preference will be given for plans that give multiple subawards (as cooperative agreements) for a variety of amounts and program models. If an applicant proposes fewer subawards for larger amounts and for fewer program models, a strong justification will be required to make the proposal competitive. Due to a potential large number of applications for subawards, the applicant should detail a plan for reviewing all of the applications and selecting subrecipients, that includes the use of experts from outside of the applicant's organization.

In its experience of over 70 years in managing people-to-people exchanges, the U.S. government has mostly relied on meeting its goal of building mutual understanding by facilitating in-person exchanges. New communications technologies are rapidly changing the way in which people meet, communicate and work together. For that reason, ECA is particularly interested in innovative proposals that will use communications technologies to strengthen the bonds between peoples.

When designing U.S. government funded open competition (s) for subawards, applicants should propose a structure to encourage creative activities that bring people together for discussion and problem solving that fully exploit the power of advanced communications technologies, including programs that blend virtual and in-person exchanges.

Additionally, applicants should mention how the choice of a software platform for virtual exchanges by a sub-applicant will be factored into the competition review and selection process. ECA would like to ensure that a diverse group of organizations can apply for the subawards, regardless of their proposed software platform

The Stevens Initiative is a multilateral public-private partnership, with millions of dollars already pledged from four governments in the Middle East and North Africa. Proposals should outline how the applicant will incorporate a possible large addition of funding to the Stevens Initiative from non-U.S. government sources. These details should include changes to staffing, administration, awarding of funds to subrecipients and project coordination and evaluation.

Applicants should outline how their organization plans to manage and coordinate the goals, funding requirements, and policies of all donors to the Stevens Initiative into one efficient structure. This should include the creation of a governing board or council of advisors where the future direction of the Stevens Initiative is discussed and planned. Plans for a governing board or council of advisors should include suggestions for selection criteria, roles of each member, and length of commitment.

As the Stevens Initiative is focused on youth engagement, applicants should outline how they will build a demand-driven program that is informed by the interests of youth. This

should include youth from the U.S. as well as the Middle East and North Africa. ECA encourages including girls and young women as well as other groups that are underrepresented. See Diversity Statement in the Proposal Submission Instructions for further information.

The budget should provide funding for staff to administer and manage open competition(s) for subawards, conduct outreach activities, and monitor and provide guidance to subrecipients. Additionally, the budget should detail what percentage of the funds will go towards subawards and the range of subaward amounts. The proposal should explain processes for reviewing and approving multiple subrecipients' budgets.

Proposals should demonstrate:

- Ability to accept funds from governments, foundations, companies, and private individuals, foreign and domestic;
- Depth of experience and capacity in conducting and administering complex and multi-faceted international initiatives;
- Success managing seamless, actively collaborative public-private partnerships;
- Success developing and executing innovative solutions to social challenges;
- Ability and experience in navigating the complexities of large foundations, government entities and international organizations, and the private sector;
- Expertise in administering global grant programs, including a mix of U.S. and non-U.S. grantees;
- Expertise and a track record of success securing sustained support from the public and private sectors, including management of gifts in kind.

Proposals should provide a plan with an anticipated timeline for continued follow-on activity with alumni (without Bureau support), such as tracking and maintaining updated lists of all alumni and facilitating follow-up activities that may include listservs and social media.

Stevens Initiative Program Brand: Applicants may not propose to use program names other than “J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative” or “Stevens Initiative” so that all participants and alumni will identify themselves first and foremost with the Stevens Initiative program. All materials produced for program activities undertaken with U.S. government funds should bear the American flag and/or State Department logo, acknowledge the U.S. Department of State as the funding source, and reflect the Department’s objectives for the program. An exception to this requirement can only be made upon agreement from ECA and the U.S. Embassy in the respective countries. Please see D.31. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients.

Above and beyond the U.S. government’s role as a founding partner of the Stevens Initiative, ECA’s activities and responsibilities for the Stevens Initiative include, but are not limited to the following:

- Provide institutional guidance regarding the overall management of the Stevens Initiative and advice on the design and implementation of new projects under the Stevens Initiative;
- Support the Stevens Initiative in all major events, and collaborate with the partners to find appropriate media outlets and venues (such as conferences and other events) to publicize and amplify the Stevens Initiative's objectives, outcomes, and activities;
- Design and coordinate relevant events related to the Stevens Initiative in cooperation with all the partners;
- Support the award recipient's lead in outreach to the private sector, civil society, governments, and multilateral institutions;
- Serve as liaison between the award recipient and personnel within the Department of State, its regional bureaus, and overseas posts;
- Monitor and evaluate the program and its participants through communications via email, phone, and site visits;
- Provide guidance on and clearing dates and venues for major activities and events;
- Represent the U.S. government as the program sponsor at events and orientations;
- Approve key personnel;
- Approve and provide input on program timelines and agendas;
- Approve all in-country partners and overseas schools;
- Review and approve all program publicity and other materials, both online and in print;
- Approve changes to program topics;
- Approve decisions related to special circumstances or problems throughout the duration of the program;
- Assist with SEVIS-related issues;
- Assist with participant emergencies; and
- Conduct performance evaluation/reviews twice a year.

The level of involvement of U.S. Embassies will vary considerably from country to country. The award recipient, subrecipients and in-country partners will be expected to coordinate with the State Department regional bureau in Washington and with the Public Affairs Section – in most cases the Cultural Affairs Officer – in each embassy to establish the appropriate level of involvement as requested by the embassy. U.S. Embassies’ activities and responsibilities may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Determining populations and priority areas of focus for Stevens Initiative recruitment, which will then be shared with the award recipient to implement;
- Providing guidance and clearance on geographical location and types of institutions or organizations that will be engaged;
- Requiring regular reports and/or meetings with in-country implementers to discuss program and participant progress;
- Providing guidance and clearance of timelines, dates of in-country activities and events, and venues for such;
- Coordinating with award recipient, subrecipients and in-country partners on inclusion of Stevens Initiative participants and alumni in appropriate embassy activities; assisting in or coordination of media coverage as appropriate; and
- In those countries or territories where a subrecipient has minimal capacity and/or there are no in-country partners, eligible U.S. Embassies may elect to participate in the Initiative at any time during the award period. The embassies will in such cases serve as the in-country partners, collaborating with the subrecipient to identify and select the overseas participants, schools and other institutions, connect them to the virtual platform, and provide general oversight and coordination of in-country program activities.

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: FY 2015

Approximate Total Funding: \$4,000,000

Approximate Number of Awards: 1

Approximate Average Award: \$4,000,000

Floor of Award Range: None.

Ceiling of Award Range: \$4,000,000

Anticipated Award Date: June 30, 2015

Anticipated Project Completion Date: December 31, 2017

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 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).

NOTE: Competitive applicants will be experienced in accepting and managing federal funding, private sector funding, and funding from international sources.

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 experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award for \$4,000,000 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.

Applicants that have not previously received an ECA grant are encouraged to include information detailing their past experience, such as work with university study abroad

programs, multi-lateral partnerships, and international cultural education, that makes them eligible to apply for this competition. Any questions about past experience that would qualify should be directed to the ECA point of contact, Mr. Brent Beemer, beemerbt@state.gov, (202) 632-6163

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 Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C, SA-5, 3rd Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, tel: (202) 632-6163; fax: (202) 632-9329, beemerbt@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. It also contains the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document, which provides specific information, award criteria and budget instructions tailored to this competition.

Please specify Mr. Brent Beemer 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 the 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. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document and the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

D.3c. 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. 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 Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is the official program sponsor of the exchange program covered by this NOFO, and an employee of the Bureau will be the "Responsible Officer" for the program under the terms of 22 CFR 62, which covers the administration of the Exchange Visitor Program (J visa program). Under the terms of 22 CFR 62, organizations receiving awards (either a grant or cooperative agreement) under this NOFO will be third parties "cooperating with or assisting the sponsor in the conduct of the sponsor's program." The actions of recipient organizations shall be "imputed to the sponsor in evaluating the sponsor's compliance with" 22 CFR 62. Therefore, the Bureau expects that any organization receiving an award under this competition will render all assistance necessary to enable the Bureau to fully comply with 22 CFR 62 et seq.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the secure and proper administration of Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by recipient organizations and program participants to all regulations governing the J visa program status. Therefore, proposals should explicitly state in writing that the applicant is prepared to assist the Bureau in meeting all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62. If your organization has experience as a designated Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor, the applicant should discuss their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et. seq., including the oversight of their 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 Office of Citizen Exchanges of ECA will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program that are funded by the U.S. government.

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

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

As the first program of its kind, the Stevens Initiative will be evaluated to assess its impact. Given the Initiative's potential for program diversity and breadth of participants, the award recipient should be prepared to spend significant time working with all partners to develop and implement a robust evaluation. The proposal should not underestimate the time and effort entailed in developing a comprehensive evaluation strategy that assesses short-, medium-, and longer term impacts of virtual exchange initiatives funded as part of the Stevens Initiative.

An evaluation plan detailing how the recipient intends to evaluate the overall Stevens

Initiative is not needed at this time. That evaluation strategy will be developed as the Stevens Initiative launches.

However, as a major component of an overall evaluation strategy, the Bureau expects the award recipient to require subrecipients to 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 plans submitted by subrecipients should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

All programs or projects funded directly by ECA funds, as a part of the Stevens Initiative, must be evaluated according to the guidelines stated here. Successful monitoring and evaluation depends heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Subrecipients' evaluation plans should include a description of their project's objectives, anticipated project outcomes, and how and when the subrecipient intends 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. Evaluation plans should also show how project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO. 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 subrecipients' proposals include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology that links outcomes to original project objectives.

Subrecipients' monitoring and evaluation plans 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, as described here. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to require subrecipients to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO:

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 subrecipients' monitoring and evaluation plans will be judged on how well they 1) specify intended outcomes; 2) give clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identify when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provide 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, e.g., satisfaction, will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

The award recipient and subrecipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Stevens Initiative partners 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: NOTE: This project is mainly envisioned as a virtual exchange program so this should be demonstrated in all proposals.

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:

- Currently, several foreign governments have committed more than \$17,000,000 over the next five years for the Stevens Initiative. Some of those funds will go to support Stevens Initiative administrative costs. ECA understands that as one of the first contributors to the Stevens Initiative, ECA will pay a large portion of the administrative setup costs in the first year. After the first year of the project, administrative costs should be spread among all contributors to the Stevens Initiative;
- Funds from ECA should make up less than half of the overall budget for the Stevens Initiative;
- More foreign governments and private sector institutions and companies have been invited to contribute to the Stevens Initiative, so there is a possibility that total funding for the Initiative will continue to increase beyond the money already pledged;
- The Initiative is currently focused on the Middle East and North Africa, but it will eventually expand worldwide; and

Note: ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program's needs and availability of funds. In addition, the Bureau reserves the right to adjust and/or add additional countries and/or regions should conditions change in a partner country and/or if other countries and/or regions are identified as viable alternatives and/or Department priorities.

- Evaluations of the work of the subrecipients and their ability to achieve project goals will be funded with this award. An evaluation of the impact of virtual exchanges under the Stevens Initiative brand should be proposed with an estimated budget, but it will not be funded in this award, at this time.

D.3n. 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 may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

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

- 1) Staff travel (including regional travel for staff of in-country partners to conduct

- trainings/manage activities in neighboring countries)
- 2) Website development and support
 - 3) Stipends or other benefits for U.S. and overseas teachers directly involved in the program
 - 4) Honoraria
 - 5) Educational materials
 - 6) Training modules (including expenses related to any in-person training)
 - 7) Curriculum Development/Integration
 - 8) Online Professional Development
 - 9) Promotional or outreach activities
 - 10) Software or supplies such as digital cameras, flip-cams, webcams, etc. to support online project work. Applicants should primarily seek out donations or acquisition of supplies through outside sources
 - 11) Internet access fees*
 - 12) Monitoring and evaluation
 - 13) Justifiable expenses directly related to program activities
 - 14) Administrative expenses: The award funds may be used to pay reasonable costs for program administration, technical support, and other administrative needs. Cost sharing in these areas is strongly encouraged.

* Internet access fees may only be included on a limited basis and should be justified within the proposal.

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, April 17, 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. In addition, external expert reviewers from the MacArthur Foundation and the J. Christopher Stevens Fund will provide analysis of the proposals that will be incorporated into the review process. 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. Program planning and ability to achieve objectives:** Proposals should clearly demonstrate how organization would coordinate this multi-leveled program. Administrative details along with implantation strategies should be included, as well as specifics on the number and size of subawards. Preference will be given for plans that give multiple subawards (as cooperative agreements) for a variety of amounts and program models. If an applicant proposes fewer subawards for larger amounts and for fewer program models, a strong justification will be required to make the proposal competitive. 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.
- 2. 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.
- 3. Institution's Record/Ability and Capacity:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful implementation of multi-leveled programs with multiple private and public stakeholders and funders, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements. Competitive proposals will also demonstrate an ability and willingness to work with program stakeholders on future iterations of the Stevens Initiative, including post-federal funding programming.

4. 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.

5. 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. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives is recommended.

6. 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.

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 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.

The following additional requirements apply to this project:

FOR ASSISTANCE AWARDS INVOLVING IRAN:

A critical component of current U.S. government Iran policy is the support for indigenous Iranian voices. The State Department has made the awarding of grants for this purpose a key component of its Iran policy. As a condition of licensing these activities, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has requested the Department of State to follow certain procedures to effectuate the goals of Sections 481(b), 531(a), 571, 582, and 635(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as amended); 18 U.S.C. §§ 2339A and 2339B; Executive Order 13224; and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6. These licensing conditions mandate that the Department conduct a vetting of potential Iran grantees and sub-grantees for counter-terrorism purposes. To conduct this vetting the Department will collect information from grantees and sub-grantees regarding the identity and background of their key employees and Boards of Directors.

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of Iran complies with requirements, please contact Mr. Brent Beemer at (202) 632-6163 or beemerbt@state.gov for additional information.

**FOR ASSISTANCE AWARDS INVOLVING THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY,
WEST BANK, AND GAZA:**

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 Mr. Brent Beemer at (202) 632-6163 or beemerbt@state.gov for additional information.

**SPECIAL PROVISION FOR PERFORMANCE IN A DESIGNATED COMBAT
AREA AND FUTURE CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS (CURRENTLY IRAQ
AND AFGHANISTAN)**

(Revised August 2014)

Each federal assistance award within areas of combat operations or future contingency operation, as designated by the Secretary of Defense (currently Iraq and Afghanistan), over \$150,000 or providing for performance over 30 days must be registered in the Department of Defense maintained Synchronized Pre-deployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) system. Each federal assistance award shall be registered in SPOT before personnel deployment. The DoS SPOT Program Office can assist with entering awards in SPOT. Please send an email to AQMOps@state.gov for information. Information on how to register in SPOT and how to report the total number of recipient personnel deploying under each award will be contained in a Special Provision within each assistance award.

Recipients that do not utilize personnel who are performing a private security function; or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support can be entered through the SPOT aggregate functionality. Upon the award of a grant/and or cooperative agreement in a designated area of combat operations or future contingency operation (currently Iraq and Afghanistan), the Grants Officer or his/her designee will enter the following award information into SPOT to include (i) a brief description of the contract (to the extent consistent with security considerations); (ii) the total value of the contract; and (iii) whether the contract was awarded competitively. The Recipient should send updated deployment numbers for each award sent to the Grants Officer and his/her designee and the Department of State's SPOT program office on a quarterly basis as follows:

The Recipient is required to submit with the quarterly financial report submission information regarding the number of individuals receiving payment from the funds being granted under this award. This report is due 30 days after the calendar year quarter and 90 days after the award period end date and also should be sent to AQMOps@state.gov with

the subject line “SPOT Quarterly Report -- Award Number”. The following information shall be provided:

1. Total number of individuals receiving payment from the funds being granted:
 - a. Total Number U.S. Personnel Deployed:
 - b. Total Number Host Country Personnel:
 - c. Total Third Country Personnel Deployed:

These reports should be sent to AQMOps@state.gov. The SPOT program office will enter the numbers into SPOT.

Recipients utilizing personnel who are performing a private security function; or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support must be entered into SPOT individually with all required personal information. The Recipient organization will designate a SPOT administrator who will obtain a SPOT company administrator account. Recipients of federal assistance awards shall register personnel in SPOT before deployment, or if already operational in the designated operational area, register personnel upon becoming an employee under the award and maintain current data in SPOT. Procedures on how to register in SPOT will be provided by the Grants Officer and his/her designee.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel. To the extent that such private security contractors (PSCs) are required, Recipients are required to ensure they adhere to Chief of Mission (COM) policies and procedures regarding the operation, oversight, and accountability of PSCs.

In a designated area of combat operations or future contingency operation, the term PSC includes any personnel providing protection of the personnel, facilities, property of a Recipient or sub-recipient at any level, or performing any other activity for which personnel are required to carry weapons in the performance of their duties.

As specific COM policies and procedures may differ in scope and applicability, recipients of federal assistance awards are advised to review post policies and procedures carefully in this regard and direct any questions to the Embassy Regional Security Office (RSO) via the Grants Officer Representative (GOR). Any exclusion to these policies must be granted by the COM via the RSO. COM policies and procedures may be obtained from the RSO via the GOR. Recipients of federal assistance awards are also advised that these policies and procedures may be amended from time to time at the post in response to changing circumstances.

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://www.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 USA Spending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.
- 5.) Quarterly program and financial reports which should include participant numbers and demographics, program highlights and upcoming events about all programs under the Stevens Initiative brand.

- 6.) Weekly contact with the award recipient's Stevens Initiative Program Officer(s) about the overall management of the Initiative, in addition to frequent communication by telephone and e-mail throughout the award period.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau 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 the Bureau upon request.

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Mr. Brent Beemer, U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C, SA-5, 3rd Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, tel: (202) 632-6163; fax: (202) 632-9329, beemberbt@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

February 13, 2015

