

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY 2015 Russian Business Leaders Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAPEC-15-049

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.415

Key Date/Application Deadline: May 29, 2015

Program Description/Executive Summary: The Professional Fellows Division in the Office of Citizen Exchanges at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) invites proposal submissions for the FY 2015 Russian Business Leaders Program. The Russian Business Leaders Program is a two-way exchange to foster entrepreneurship, encourage business innovation, and provide concrete business leadership and professional skills for a new generation of Russian business professionals. The Russian Business Leaders Program builds on the foundation of the traditional Professional Fellows Program model and offers a dynamic and substantive professional experience to Russian entrepreneurs and business leaders, ages 22-27, working in the fields of technology, innovation, social media, business, and social entrepreneurship. The Program will support 44 Russian participants in a practical four- to five-week internship or "practicum" in a U.S. workplace complemented by collaborative projects, robust follow-on activities, and a peer mentoring program in the participant's home country with ECA and Professional Fellows Program alumni. The program will tentatively take place from May through June of 2016. The American outbound exchange component will support approximately 13-15 American participants going overseas for approximately two weeks in length to assist with the implementation of the Russian fellows' follow-on projects.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs expects to award a cooperative agreement of up to \$750,000 for the administration of the FY 2015 Russian Business Leaders Program. 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.

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 and Program Description:

The Russian Business Leaders Program is a mechanism to support and encourage young Russian professionals interested in developing business and professional skills to succeed in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. The Russian Business Leaders participants will undertake a four- to five-week practicum in public offices, innovation hubs, small businesses, or non-profit and non-governmental organizations across the United States working with seasoned professionals on substantive issues.

The FY 2015 Russian Business Leaders Program will provide opportunities for approximately 44 emerging business leaders to more effectively address the organizational and leadership challenges facing businesses, non-profit organizations, technology start-ups, social entrepreneurship initiatives, and other related enterprises across the Russian Federation. It is envisioned that through the practicum and supplemental enrichment seminars, the Russian Business Leaders Program will enable participants to experience U.S. best practices in areas such as strategic planning, creating and articulating a shared organizational vision, fostering innovation, building teams, engaging employees, etc. Strong emphasis should be placed on helping participants devise concrete strategies on how to implement new business ideas upon return to their workplace.

The Russian Business Leaders Program seeks to:

1. facilitate and strengthen the participants' ability to provide principled organizational leadership and management strategies in a complex work environment through a U.S.-based practicum and enrichment seminars;
2. provide concrete tools for enhanced leadership and engagement in businesses and organizations across the Russian Federation;
3. cultivate professional ties with U.S. citizens and the broader American business community through collaborative follow-on projects;
4. create a network of business leaders committed to sound business practices, ethical management, social entrepreneurship, and community involvement; and,
5. expand and strengthen the relationship between the people of the United States and the Russian Federation to work in partnership on issues of mutual interest.

Proposals that target countries other than Russia or participants that are not Russian citizens will be deemed technically ineligible. Proposals should incorporate contingency plans into their proposal narrative in anticipation of any difficulties related to programming or participant travel to or from the Russian Federation.

A.2. Participants

For the purposes of this program, "participants" are defined as citizens of the Russian Federation selected through a merit-based, open competition to participate in the Russian Business Leaders Program. Russian participants must be junior career professionals,

ages 22-27, with at least two years of experience working in small or start-up business ventures, business administration, non-governmental organizations, business education, incubation hubs, community training programs, or social entrepreneurship. Russian participants should have demonstrated leadership abilities and a stated interest in developing business and management skills to more effectively direct institutions, teams, projects, or new initiatives (inside or outside of their professional capacity). Participants must possess the intercultural and English language skills necessary to benefit fully from the exchange experience.

Participants should be placed in non-profit and non-governmental organizations, innovation hubs, public offices, or private sector institutions with expertise relevant to the participants' focus. U.S. host organizations should be working on business or management projects that could provide participants with a substantive exchange and experiential learning opportunities and express a willingness to support participants' individual projects upon their return home. Preference should be given to host organizations that have identified potential collaborative projects or initiatives of interest for the Russian Business Leaders' participants. To enhance the viability and impact of participants' individual projects, proposals should include follow-on and alumni programming activities that provide continued support for the participants' individual projects and professional development opportunities through the end of award period and as possible, beyond. Every effort should be made to utilize existing web or social technologies to build a network of like-minded business leaders, strengthen relationships, and maximize program impact.

In terms of American participants, they should be chosen from within U.S. hosting organizations. Preference should be given to individuals who have provided guidance on participants' individual projects, offered mentoring throughout the exchange program, and demonstrated interest in supporting participants after they return home to the Russian Federation. If possible, American participants should also express a willingness to share their expertise in community and public diplomacy events that complement in-country programs lead by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

Applicants should maximize the number of participants, the length of the U.S.-based and overseas program components at the given funding level. Therefore, applicants who engage public and private partners for programming support and employ other creative techniques to increase or stretch funding dollars will be deemed more competitive than those that do not, under the Cost Effectiveness and Cost-Sharing review criterion.

A.3. Partner Organizations

Applicants must identify the U.S.-, Russian-, and foreign-based organizations and individuals with whom they are proposing to collaborate to implement the Russian Business Leaders Program, and describe any previous cooperative activities. Having a brick and mortar presence in the Russian Federation is not required. However applicants that demonstrate institutional capacity in the Russian Federation—whether through their own resources or through partnerships with other organizations or institutions—will be given stronger consideration under the Institutional Capacity and Track Record criterion.

In addition, proposals must demonstrate capacity in the United States to secure effective and appropriate host placements for the participants. Proposals that include letters of commitment from possible U.S. host organizations will be deemed more competitive under the Institutional Capacity and Track Record criterion.

A.4. Project Activities

Projects should include placement of participants in carefully identified four- to five-week practicum in non-profit and non-governmental organizations, business start-ups, or other public and private organizations where participants will work with seasoned organization leaders on leadership and management challenges related to the participants' business activities in the Russian Federation. Strong project designs should include enrichment activities related to business leadership and management that ground and augment the practicum. Special attention should be paid to ensuring that individual program components, for both the Russian and American participants, work together to create a comprehensive model that best supports the Russian Business Leaders stated goals.

A.5. Program Guidelines

In a cooperative agreement, ECA's Office of Citizen Exchanges, Professional Fellows Division, is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. ECA anticipates working closely with the award recipient to ensure that all program activities support the goals of the Russian Business Leaders Program. ECA activities and responsibilities for this program include participation in the design and direction of program implementation including recruitment and selection strategies, development of publicity and program materials, creation of enrichment and online components, and execution of U.S.-based, follow-on, and alumni programming. **Please see Section A.9 for a complete list of ECA and the award recipient's responsibilities under this award.**

A.6. Project Outputs

Proposals should fully demonstrate capacity to provide the following project outputs:

A.6a. Recruitment and Selection of Participants

Russian Participants: Utilizing the latest in technology including web interfaces, SMS technology, and other social media platforms, the award recipient will administer a robust recruitment campaign to advertise the Russian Business Leaders Program. Online applications should be distributed through appropriate media sites targeted to emerging business leaders meeting the eligibility requirements. The recipient organization should work closely with ECA and the U.S. Embassy in the Russian Federation to ensure that outreach efforts are tailored to have the broadest reach. Every effort should be made to attract a large and diverse participant pool, including persons with disabilities, minorities, a balanced mix of male and female participants, and, participants with various educational and professional backgrounds.

Recruitment and selection of candidates for the Russian Business Leaders Program is the responsibility of the award recipient in collaboration with ECA. The U.S. Embassy in

Moscow is unable to offer more than minimal support for these processes. It is required, however, that the award recipient maintain ongoing communication with and as possible the involvement of the Embassy's Public Affairs Section (PAS) during the interview, selection and pre-departure orientation phases of the program. The proposal should provide a clear outline of the recruitment and selection process and address the award recipient's plans for maintaining a close working relationship with PAS throughout the entire program cycle.

At a minimum, the participant selection criteria for Russian participants of the Russian Business Leaders Program must include the below:

- Between the ages 22-27;
- Citizen of the Russian Federation;
- Living and working in the Russian Federation at the time of application;
- Currently working on a new business venture, initiative, or project and has at least two (2) years of professional experience in this capacity at the time of application;
- Able to begin the Business Leaders Program in the United States in late-spring 2016;
- Able to receive a U.S. J-1 visa;
- Committed to returning to Russian Federation after completion of the program;
- Proficient in spoken and written English at the time of application; and,
- Has a stated interest in developing an individual project in their home workplace or community.

Individuals in the following circumstances are NOT eligible for the Russian Business Leaders Program:

- U.S. citizens and/or permanent residents of the United States;
- Individuals who have participated in an exchange visitor program sponsored or funded by the U.S. Government (e.g., U.S. Department of State, Public Affairs Sections of U.S. Embassies or other U.S. Government agencies) who have not fulfilled their two-year home residency requirement by the time of application; and;
- Individuals who have applied for U.S. permanent residency in the past three years.

American Participants: American participants will be selected in an open, merit-based, competitive process in consultation with ECA, and will be primarily selected from those individuals who serve as hosts/supervisors/mentors to the Russian participants at U.S. host organizations. Additionally, American participants should have demonstrated business or management expertise and should have had significant engagement with the Russian participants during the U.S. program component.

A.6b. Program Components for Russian Participants

The award recipient will design and implement a U.S.-based program component for Russian participants that are five- to six-weeks in length followed by robust in-country programming. Key program elements for the Russian participants must include:

- A “pre-departure orientation” (PDO), preferably in the Russian Federation, before departure for the United States;
- A “program orientation” upon arrival in the United States preferably in Washington, D.C.;
- A substantive practicum tailored to each Russian participant’s work/interests that is a minimum of four-weeks in length;
- A homestay component for the majority of the participant’s exchange period;
- An individual project for each Russian participant to be complete after their return to the Russian Federation;
- Upon conclusion of the participant’s practicum, participation at a final conference arranged by the award recipient in Washington, D.C.;
- A debrief with U.S. Embassy representatives upon return to home country;
- A plan for post-program engagement with the Russian participants that includes robust alumni programming and active peer mentoring component; and
- A program evaluation.

U.S.-based program activities for Russian participants should also, if possible, include a volunteer/community service element. Every effort should be made for the Russian participants to engage with a range of American citizens regarding their work and their home country, such as through community/school presentations and media interviews.

A.6c. Participant Placements

The award recipient must secure, preferably at least three weeks in advance of the Russian participants arriving in the United States, a substantive and appropriately-tailored practicum that is a minimum of four weeks in length. The purpose of the practicum is to provide Russian participants with a professional development program that includes direct experience with the day-to-day workings of a U.S. workplace and the opportunity to form professional relationships with American colleagues. Proposals should discuss how the award recipient will recruit and select U.S. host organizations. To ensure that each Russian participant has a substantive professional experience, each practicum should involve the commitment of a designated host/supervisor/mentor who understands the goals and objectives of the Russian Business Leaders Program.

Practicums could focus on such topics as entrepreneurship/social entrepreneurship; best practices in creating and managing small businesses; social and business innovation; the role of government in spurring economic growth; community-based and educational training programs; employment readiness; global competency and readiness; transparency and accountability in business; the promotion of sustainable and inclusive economic development; and economic empowerment of women, minorities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized populations. Proposals that secure one placement during the exchange rather than multiple, short-term placements with different U.S.

organizations will be deemed more competitive under the Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives criterion.

Proposals should describe how the award recipient will work, throughout the life of the award, with each Russian participant on the development and implementation of his/her individual projects upon return to his/her home country. Proposals should include a timeline for the Russian participants to create drafts and final versions of an action plan for his/her individual project, as well as a process and deadlines for the participants to update the award recipient on his/her progress implementing the individual project.

A.6e. Outbound Programs for American Participants (“American Outbound Programs”)

The award recipient will design and implement outbound programs that are approximately two weeks in length, for approximately 13-15 American participants to travel to the Russian Federation to conduct joint programming with the Russian participants and their colleagues. American outbound programs should be substantive in nature, build on the U.S. practicum component, and support the creation of sustainable and lasting professional partnerships. Proposals should describe how the American outbound components, to the degree possible, will support the Russian participants’ individual projects. Proposals should clearly describe the type of American outbound programs that will be implemented by the award recipient.

A.6f. Collaboration with the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow

The award recipient will need to work closely with the PAS in Moscow to keep them apprised of project implementation and as possible, invite PAS staff to participate in scheduled in-country program activities. It is important that all scheduled American outbound programs are shared in a timely manner with PAS. Many American participants will be subject matter experts on issues pertinent to various U.S. foreign policy objectives in the respective country. The expertise and willingness of the American participants to take part in public diplomacy outreach can greatly complement in-country PAS programs, thereby enhancing the impact of the exchange. The proposal should address plans for maintaining a close working relationship with PAS Moscow throughout the life of the award.

A.6g. Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) and Arrival Orientation

For both Russian and American participants, the award recipient will be responsible for conducting a PDO prior to departing the Russian Federation, and, as possible, an arrival orientation upon arriving in the United States. For Russian participants, the PDO and arrival orientation should cover, at a minimum:

- travel logistics, including arrival information and J-1 visa regulations;
- project goals, programmatic expectations, performance measurement;
- a detailed Program Schedule, including specific information about the community where each participant will be located;
- cross-cultural issues and day-to-day considerations of living and working in the United States, including standards of conduct;
- leadership skills development;

- discussion of ethical leadership and public good; and,
- team building activities that model civic and community engagement.

A.6h. Professional Development Activities: Leadership Component, Business Seminars and Professional Enhancements

Professional activities, virtual and in-person, should be an integral part of the program and directly complement and reinforce the participant's practicum experience.

Professional development activities and/or supplemental sessions could consist of a carefully integrated series of lectures, panel presentations, on-line seminar discussions, individual and group activities, reading assignments before and during the fellowship period, etc. All activities should place a strong emphasis on the use of analytic tools, communications and management skills, and leadership development. Participants should be exposed to a variety of business leaders, community developers, and policy experts representing diverse background, viewpoints, and occupations on the business topics and leadership issues to be explored.

The award recipient should develop a comprehensive and collaborative approach to business leadership that is reinforced through the practicum, enhanced through supplemental sessions, and strengthened via in-person and online discussions. The leadership component should include at least one leadership training session per week during the U.S.-based program for the Russian participants. These sessions should be creative, highly interactive, and team oriented. They should require input and contribution from all participants, model key learning objectives, and provide Fellows with enhanced leadership skills. The award recipient may recruit qualified instructors for these sessions from outside organizations. As possible, technology should be an integral part of all program activities, particularly as they pertain to and strengthen program goals, create a forum for dialogue on business and management challenges, and allow a robust repository for resources and best practices.

A.6i. End of Program Conference

At the end of the Russia Business Leaders Program, a three- to four-day closing conference will be held in Washington, DC in June 2016, to highlight key learning objectives and outline plans for individual projects. The award recipient will work closely with the Office of Citizen Exchanges to coordinate this event. The award recipient will be responsible for setting up meetings in the Washington, DC area and providing transportation, lodging, per diem, working lunches, reception and miscellaneous expenses for all program Fellows. The Office of Citizen Exchanges will be responsible for arranging meetings with key stakeholders within the U.S. Department of State.

The proposal should discuss the goals and objectives of the event, propose possible conference themes and topics, forums for dialogue and exchange of ideas between participants and invited guests, as well as ways to highlight the program. Special attention should be given to an examination of how Russian Business Leaders Program participants will translate and utilize their U.S. experiences in their home communities.

A.6j. Debrief with U.S. Embassy Representatives in the Russian Federation

Proposals should include a plan for a scheduled debrief with Embassy representatives after the Russian participants return to their home country.

A.6k. Follow-on Engagement: Individual Projects and Alumni Programming

Proposals should include concrete plans for developing innovative and sustainable enhancement activities that reinforce project goals after the Russian participants return to the Russian Federation. The proposals should exercise creativity in the conceptualization of the follow-on component and its support for Russian Business Leaders Program goals. The proposal should include plans for an American outbound program with approximately 13-15 U.S. host mentors. Competitive outbound programs will directly support the Russian Business Leaders Program goals of cultivating professional ties with U.S. citizens, creating a network of business leaders committed to sound business practices, ethical management, and community involvement in the Russian Federation. Proposals should clearly articulate how the award recipient will provide ECA with regular updates on the Russian participants' individual projects as well as professional successes resulting from their participation in the Russian Business Leaders Program.

The proposal must also include a defined strategy for alumni engagement that reflects the goals and anticipated outcomes of the Russian Business Leaders Program. The proposal should include the following:

- an outline of any proposed follow-on activities or initiatives;
- information on how proposed programming will be coordinated with existing alumni efforts in the Russian Federation designed to support business, innovation, technology and leadership;
- strategies to connect the alumni of the Russian Business Leaders Program with ECA program alumni working in the fields of business, innovation, and technology. Special emphasis should be placed on strengthening ties between alumni of the Russian Business Leaders Program and the Professional Fellows Program; and,
- an articulated plan for utilizing DOS and other alumni tools and social media outlets to provide continued support to program alumni.

The proposal should also include a pilot mentoring program designed to connect the alumni of the Russian Business Leaders Program with ECA alumni; specifically, alumni of the Professional Fellows Program. The pilot mentoring program should help a younger generation of Russian business leaders interact with their more experienced peers to provide ongoing support, continued professional development, opportunities to troubleshoot, and build a broader professional network across the Russian Federation. The mentoring program should likewise provide involved alumni of the Professional Fellows Program opportunities for continued professional growth and development. Follow-on programming and alumni events can include alumni from both the Russian Business Leaders Program and the Professional Fellows Program.

The proposal should also demonstrate how the award recipient will creatively utilize technology and online networking sites to engage with program participants before, during and after they take part in the international exchange. As appropriate, the proposal should elaborate on creative ways to encourage discussion about international exchange and hosting opportunities on the ECA and the State Department's Facebook and other social networking sites.

The tracking of alumni is crucial for the evaluation of the program and for the implementation of follow-on programs. The proposal must provide a clear plan for alumni tracking and cite how it will be coordinated with ECA and PAS. The award recipient will be expected to meet all statistical requirements including the submission of all grantee data for the Bureau's annual statistical report. Please refer to ECA's General Policy Guidance on Alumni Outreach/Follow-on and Engagement and Commitment to Public Private Partnerships in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional details on alumni activities.

A.6l. Monitoring and Evaluation

For detailed guidance on monitoring and evaluation, please refer to: 1) Section D.3j. "Program Monitoring and Evaluation"; and 2) Section E.1. "Review Criteria", specifically for the criterion entitled "Program Monitoring and Evaluation."

The award recipient may employ a professional evaluator not associated with the award recipient to collect and analyze data, draw conclusions, and make recommendations when warranted. The award recipient may also be expected to assist with administering ECA-generated pre- and post-surveys to all participants.

A.6m. Web-Based Technology

Proposals should explain how the program model will use the Internet and other web-based tools to enhance and support key goals and objectives. These include but are not limited to networking among program participants, encouraging professional resource sharing, and supporting continued professional development. Special emphasis should be placed on the ways in which technology will facilitate communication among selected Russian participants and their placement organizations before departing for the United States, strengthen networking, and streamline key administrative and programmatic processes such as recruitment and follow-on/alumni activities.

A.6n. Public Outreach Efforts and Social Media

"Telling the story" is a vital element of successful public diplomacy programs. Proposals should provide a clearly articulated public outreach and social media strategy to raise awareness of the importance and impact of educational exchanges.

Proposals should identify ways to engage with Russian and American participants, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, ECA, and other key stakeholders through social media. Plans may include, but are not limited to, using social media for recruitment and outreach efforts, engaging with ECA or U.S. Department of State social media sites, tweeting program updates, and using blogs or other platforms to document and share participant

experiences and success stories. Proposals should also explain how social media will be used to engage program alumni.

Proposals should also indicate agreement to follow guidance in the PSI entitled “Acknowledgment of ECA’s Financial Support and Use of the Department Seal.”

A.7. Key Administrative Elements

Visas for Entry into the United States, the Russian Federation, or Foreign Countries

To procure U.S. visas for the Russian participants, the award recipient will work with ECA and PAS at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow or U.S. Consulates as needed. The award recipient will need to collect and submit to ECA all required biographical information on the Russian participants that is necessary to complete the DS-2019 form required for their J-1 visas. To procure Russian visas for the American participants the award recipient will work directly with the respective Russian embassy in the United States.

International Air Travel

The award recipient must comply with all Federal regulations regarding the use of U.S. Government funds including the Fly America Act. These regulations apply to both U.S. and Russian travelers.

A.8. Projected Program Timeline

ECA envisions the approximate dates of the FY 2015 Russian Business Leaders Program to be as follows:

- *September 2015 – December 2016:* Recruitment and selection of Russian participants
- *January 2016 – February 2016:* Recruitment of U.S. hosting institutions. Secure U.S.-based hosts and host sites
- *May 2016:* Travel to the United States by Russian participants to attend D.C.-based orientation
- *May – June 2016:* Russian Business Leaders Exchange practicums
- *June 2016:* Travel to Washington, DC, for end-of-program workshop
- *September 2016 – July 2017:* Conduct follow-on collaborative projects by U.S. participants and alumni programming.

A.9. ECA Responsibilities

In a cooperative agreement, ECA/PE/C is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. A list of ECA and applicant responsibilities is included below:

ECA activities and responsibilities for this program are as follows:

1. Participate and provide guidance in the design, direction, and execution of all program activities;
2. Approve key personnel;
3. Approve and provide input on program timelines and agendas;
4. Approve partner organizations and U.S. host organizations;

5. Approve the final selection of all Russian participants;
6. Involvement, to the extent possible, in the final selection of American participants;
7. Approve decisions related to special circumstances or problems throughout the duration of program, including assisting with participant emergencies;
8. Assist with SEVIS-related issues;
9. Issue participant DS-2019 forms;
10. Enroll participants in the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) for the duration of the program, issuing health benefits identifications cards, and providing instructions on host claim forms;
11. Liaise with the U.S. Embassy and Consulates in the Russian Federation on recruitment, selection, web-based publicity efforts, and DC-based opening and closing events;
12. Work with the award recipient to publicize the program through various media outlets (such as the social media platforms of ECA and PAS), including approving all program publicity, outreach efforts, and other materials; and,
13. Monitor and evaluate the program through site visits or debriefing sessions.

The responsibilities of the award recipient are as follows:

1. Develop a robust recruitment strategy that targets individuals meeting the eligibility criteria for the program and adheres to ECA's goals for a merit-based open competition;
2. Design and launch a web-based application tool that can collect and share applicant information with ECA;
3. Develop a transparent review process to evaluate applications for the Russian Business Leaders Program. The award recipient will work closely with ECA on the development and implementation of review criteria and keep ECA informed about its application and evaluation process;
4. Arrange virtual or in-person English language interviews for semi-finalists during the second round of the selection process;
5. Conduct pre-departure orientations (virtual or otherwise) for finalists in home countries, answering their questions on programmatic issues, including, but not limited to, participant practicums and community placements, program responsibilities and expectations, travel, accident and sickness benefits, housing, ;
6. Utilize the Web and other outreach tools to facilitate communication among newly selected finalists and host communities prior to their departure to the U.S., including the posting of program and community resources, pre-program assignments, and personal travel logs;
7. Conduct an open competition for potential U.S. organizations to host participants of the Russian Business Leaders Program;
8. Create programmatic guidelines and materials for U.S. host organizations. The award recipient should provide a virtual orientation for U.S. host organizations that clearly outlines hosting roles and responsibilities;
9. Arrange round-trip travel for participants from their home cities to U.S. host organizations;

10. Conduct a comprehensive orientation for program participants;
11. Secure relevant four- to five-week practicums for the Russian participants;
12. Arrange host stays for the Russian participants in the United States with properly screened and briefed American families;
13. Develop and integrate a strong leadership development component into the program;
14. Develop and facilitate professional enrichment activities that emphasize the goals of the Russian Business Leaders Program, including leadership development, social entrepreneurship, community engagement, and the intersection of the private business, public and non-governmental sectors;
15. Conduct an end-of-program workshop in Washington, DC;
16. Consult closely with ECA on developing a comprehensive outreach strategy for highlighting participant achievements while in the United States and after their return home including the use of online and other social media platforms;
17. Monitor participants and the performance of hosting institutions for the duration of the participant's practicum;
18. Work closely with Russian participants in the design and implementation of individual follow-on projects and American outbound projects including the agenda and activities;
19. Evaluate, in close consultation with ECA, the program and its impact on Russian and American participants during their program and after they return to their home countries. Evaluation plans should include how the award recipient will capture results of the Russian participants' individual small projects and how and when those results will be reported to ECA;
20. Manage financial aspects of the program (including timely disbursement of participant stipends, housing allowances, accident and sickness benefits, hosting agreements, and other activity costs) and promptly report any irregularities in the budget or spending to ECA;
21. Notify ECA of all international travel of the award recipient staff;
22. Participate in a mid-program review with ECA (in person or by telephone) to be held at a mutually convenient date and time for the award recipient and ECA, to identify any program and budget matters of concern;
23. Report programmatic, financial and statistical information to ECA including a brief monthly email update and/or phone call outlining general programmatic activities conducted during the past month and anticipated programmatic activities to be conducted the following month;
24. Respond fully and promptly to requests for program information from ECA; and,
25. Ensure compliance with the terms of the Cooperative Agreement with ECA, including, but not limited to, submitting timely financial and program reports and proper budget oversight.

A.10. What to Include in Your Proposal

A.10a. Executive Summary

The Executive Summary should be one page in length and include: description of the type of participants, goals of the project, names of all partner organizations responsible

for project implementation, numbers of participants (both Russian and American), and approximate dates of the exchange program in both the U.S. and Russian Federation.

A.10b. Proposal Narrative

In 20, double-spaced pages, the proposal narrative should include/address all items specifically referenced in this NOFO, in the PSI, and those items noted below:

Project Goals, Objectives, Anticipated Outcomes: Proposals should include a clear, succinct statement of project goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes that expand upon the Russian Business Program's goals as stated in Section A of this Notice of Funding Opportunity. Objectives should be described in specific, measurable, and realistic terms that are achievable within the scope of the project, both in terms of time and funding.

Background Information on the applicant organization and partner organizations: For each organization, the mission, date of establishment, relevant expertise working in the Russian Federation, past programmatic work, and ongoing programmatic work should be described. Previous awards from the Bureau since 2005 (especially those involving the exchange of young professionals or with the Russian Federation), including both grants and cooperative agreements, should be listed by office (Citizen Exchanges, International Visitors, Academic Exchanges, etc.), project name, countries, year, and amount. Proposals should describe previous collaboration with proposed partner organizations, as well as clearly delineate a division of responsibilities between all organizations that will be involved in the project.

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan: Proposals should describe in detail the applicant organization's proposed approach for monitoring and evaluation. For further guidance, please see Section D.3j. "Program Monitoring and Evaluation." Detailed evaluation plans that put the narrative over the 20-page limit and sample evaluation surveys or other evaluation tools may be included as an attachment.

Budget: For more budget information including specific allowable costs, refer to both Section D.3o., as well as the PSI document. Proposals should describe how the recipient organization will conduct budget oversight as it relates to project management. In addition, proposals must include a detailed budget narrative.

Supplemental Materials:

The items below should be included as supplemental materials. Please label each document in a clear and concise manner (i.e. Program Management Plan; Letters of Support, etc.).

- A Project Management Plan for the entire life of the project that lists, in table format, outputs (major tasks that will be implemented by the award recipient and partner organizations), dates, and the organization/staff responsible;
- Letters of commitment and/or letters of support from: 1) proposed partner organizations (U.S.-, Russia-, and foreign-based); 2) proposed or past host organizations; and 3) preferably, from past exchange program participants;

- Resumes (no more than two pages in length) of proposed key staff at the applicant organization and all partner organizations that will be involved in the implementation of the project; and
- Draft program implementation materials such as the U.S. program schedule, sample American Outbound program schedule, the program announcement, program application, agenda for the pre-departure orientation and the arrival orientation, and materials on any other key program elements.

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: \$750,000

Approximate Number of Awards: one

Approximate Average Award: \$750,000

Floor of Award Range: none

Ceiling of Award Range: \$750,000

Anticipated Award Date: Pending availability of funds, *September 1, 2015*

Anticipated Project Completion Date: *September 30, 2017*

C. Eligibility Information:

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

C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

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

C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

a.) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award, in an amount of \$750,000 to support

program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

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

-All proposals that target countries other than Russia or participants that are not Russian citizens will be deemed technically ineligible.

-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 PSI document.

D. Application and Submission Information:

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

D.1 Contact Information to Request an Application Package:

Please contact the Office of Citizen Exchanges, Professional Fellows Division ECA/PE/C, SA-5, 3rd Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 632-6083 (ph) and (202) 632-9355 (fax), GustafsonDP@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

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

Please specify Linnéa E. Allison and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

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

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

Please read all information before downloading.

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

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

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

Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory PSI 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.

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

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

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for further information.

D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

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

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

D.3k. Virtual Exchange Component: ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our International Exchange Alumni space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

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

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

D.3n. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. 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:

Travel: International and domestic airfare; airline baggage and seat fees; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act. There is no charge for J-1 visas for participants in Bureau-sponsored projects.

Per Diem: For U.S.-based programming, organizations should use the published Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>. ECA requests applicants to budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed Federal per diem rates. Foreign per diem rates can be accessed at: http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78

Book and Cultural Allowances: Applicant organizations may budget for a one-time cultural allowance of \$150 per person. As appropriate, organizations may budget for books and materials to support the professional enrichment and leadership development components. Interpreters should be reimbursed up to \$150 for expenses when they escort participants to cultural events. U.S. project staff, trainers or participants are not eligible to receive these benefits.

Consultants: Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Honoraria rates should not exceed \$250 per day per session. Organizations are encouraged to cost-share rates that would exceed that figure. Subcontracting organizations may also be employed, in which case the written agreement between the prospective grantee and sub-grantee should be included in the proposal. Such sub-awards should detail the division of responsibilities and proposed costs, and subcontracts should be itemized in the budget.

Room Rental: The rental of meeting space should not exceed \$250 per day per activity. Any rates that exceed this amount should be cost shared.

Materials: Proposals may contain costs to purchase, develop and translate materials to support program activities as needed.

Supplies: Applicants may propose to use award funds to purchase supplies, such as computers and printers; supply costs should be justified in the budget narrative. Costs for furniture are not allowed.

Working Meal: One working meal may be provided during each major program activity. Per capita costs for working meals may not exceed \$45/person, excluding room rental and other overhead charges. The number of invited guests may not exceed participants by more than a factor of two-to-one.

Return Travel Allowance: A return travel allowance of \$70 for each Russian participant may be included in the budget. This allowance would cover incidental expenses incurred during international travel.

Re-Entry Seminars: Costs related to providing Russian participants a re-entry seminar may include per diem, hotel accommodations, material development, and other related expenses.

Health and Travel Insurance: The award recipient will be responsible for working with ECA to ensure that both Russian and American participants are enrolled in the ECA-sponsored Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). The premium is paid by ECA and should not be included in the proposal budget. Applicants may include costs for travel insurance for both Russian and American participants in the budget.

Wire Transfer Fees: When necessary, applicants may include costs to transfer funds to Russia-based and foreign-based partner organizations. Award recipients are urged to research applicable taxes that may be imposed on these transfers by host governments.

In-Country Travel Costs for Visa Processing Purposes: Visas for Russian participants are provided by DOS and should not be included in the budget. Given the requirements associated with obtaining J-1 visas for ECA-supported participants, applicants should include costs for any travel associated with procuring visas, including travel for interviews, delivering or picking up passports, etc.

Administrative Costs: Costs necessary for the effective administration of the project may include salaries for employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the PSI. Proposals should show strong administrative cost sharing contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner and other sources. Award recipient staff travel should NOT be included in the exchange participant numbers.

Reasonable Accommodations: Organizations should budget for the reasonable accommodations of participating individuals with disabilities. Proposals may allocate up to 5 - 7% of the total requested ECA award funds for this purpose.

Professional Enrichment Sessions: Costs related to the development of professional enrichment materials, sessions, seminars, online course materials, consultants, etc. should be included in the budget.

Alumni Activities: The applicant organization should anticipate and include costs related to alumni activities, including a pilot mentoring program with ECA and Professional Fellows Program alumni. Proposed funding for alumni activities must be clearly tied to in-country programming and explained in narrative form. Proposals should also demonstrate how the award recipient will creatively utilize technology and online networking sites to enhance and amplify alumni programming.

Web Technology: As appropriate, the applicant organization may budget for technology to support the broader program goals.

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

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

Application Deadline Date: May 29, 2015

Method of Submission:

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

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov.

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

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

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

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

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

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

Email: support@grants.gov

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an

application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

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

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

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

E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA

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

1. Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives: Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, direct linkage to the goals of the Professional Participants Program, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Proposals should demonstrate a realistic and achievable scope that fits within the budgetary and time parameters set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Proposals that secure one placement during the exchange rather than multiple, short-term placements with different U.S. organizations will be deemed more competitive under the Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives criterion. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how project objectives and key project elements, especially the development of individual projects by the Russian participants, will be achieved through programmatic activities.

2. Support of Diversity: Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity and describe how that policy will be integrated into all aspects of the program including but not limited to selection of participants, placement

sites, program materials, training methodology, etc. Applicants should demonstrate readiness to accommodate participants with physical disabilities. Applicants should refer to the Bureau's "Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines" in the PSI document.

3. Institutional Capacity and Track Record: Proposals should include (1) the institution's mission and date of establishment; (2) detailed information about proposed partners including a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities; (3) an outline of prior awards, U.S. government and/or private support received, for programs of a similar nature; and (4) descriptions and resumes of key staff who will implement the program. The proposal should reflect the institution's expertise in the subject area and an institutional record of successful exchange programs particularly working in the Russian Federation, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau grants as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Having a brick and mortar presence in the Russian Federation is not required. However applicants that demonstrate institutional capacity in the Russian Federation—whether through their own resources or through partnerships with other organizations or institutions—will be given stronger consideration under this criterion. Proposals that include letters of commitment from possible U.S. host organizations will be deemed more competitive under this criterion.

4. 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. Proposals should include draft evaluation instruments, such as surveys and questionnaires, plus a description of a methodology that will be used to link outcomes to original project objectives.

5. Cost Effectiveness and Cost Sharing: The applicant should demonstrate efficient use of Bureau funds. 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. The proposal should maximize cost sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions, which demonstrates institutional and community commitment. Applicants who engage public and private partners for programming support and employ other creative techniques to increase or stretch funding dollars will be deemed more competitive than those that do not under this review criterion.

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 a 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.

F.2 **Administrative and National Policy Requirements:**

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

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

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>.

<https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>

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

Mandatory:

- 1.) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). The first page of the Performance Progress Report form (SF-PPR) must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here: http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68. The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [GrantSolutions.gov](http://Grantsolutions.gov), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.
- 2.) A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all program performance reports.
- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 4.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to:

FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D. Application and Submission Instructions above for D.3.j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation information.

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

Program Data Requirements:

Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Linnéa E. Allison, U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges, Professional Participants Division, ECA/PE/C SA-5, 3rd Floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, (202) 632-6060 and 632-9355 (fax), allisonle@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.

Kelly Keiderling
Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

April 27, 2015

