

**Department of State**

**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO):** FY2015 U.S. Building Study Abroad Capacity at U.S. Higher Education Institutions MOOC

**Announcement Type:** New Cooperative Agreement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** ECA-ECAAS-15-007

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 19.009

**Key Date/Application Deadline:** Tuesday, June 2, 2015

**Executive Summary:**

The Office of Global Educational Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), U.S. Department of State, is pleased to announce an open competition for proposals to advance the Bureau's objectives of mutual understanding between the people of the United States and those of other countries, specifically through advancing U.S. student mobility, through the development of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on "Building Study Abroad Capacity at U.S. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)." This MOOC is a component of the Department's engagement on expanding and diversifying U.S. study abroad through its new U.S. study abroad branch.

A single award recipient will be selected to design and successfully launch a publicly accessible MOOC no later than September 30, 2016.

This MOOC should be designed to:

1. Provide a comprehensive overview of options for establishing or expanding quality study abroad programs for U.S. higher education institutions of all types and at all stages of study abroad development;
2. Serve as a lasting tool for training and retraining of higher education professionals (administrators and faculty members) whose job responsibilities wholly or in-part engage with U.S. study abroad or international educational planning more broadly; and
3. Offer best practices for expanding and diversifying U.S. study abroad both in terms of U.S. student participation, U.S. institutional participation, and the geographic and institutional breadth of study abroad destinations abroad.

For the purposes of this cooperative agreement U.S. study abroad programming should be construed in the broadest possible definition to include: short-term and long-term programs; university-administered and those programs administered by third-party providers; institutional partnerships; uni-directional, multi-directional exchange programs, academic study, internships, and service learning programs; and both physical and virtual study abroad opportunities.

The MOOC should offer detailed explorations on such topics as matching institutional or academic objectives with study abroad opportunities, broadening and diversifying student

and faculty participation in study abroad, finding and maintaining strong international partnerships, and ensuring safety and academic integrity in study abroad programming.

### **Overall Program Activities**

The MOOC should be designed, tested, and successfully launched on or before September 30, 2016. The applicant is responsible for fully detailing the planned design, the proposed content and structure of the content, and user accessibility and navigation. The MOOC should be designed to work both as a single, structured course and as free-standing training modules on selected topics. It is recommended that each module include summary sections that may be used as refreshers for those who have completed entire modules and to provide basic topical overviews for individuals without the ability to commit to a full module or the entire course.

A description must be provided of the selected platform to be used. The course must be created in a high professional quality and meet all MOOC industry technical standards, including for audio/video content. The course must have an “on-demand” design, i.e., with an immediate, “start anytime” self-enrollment and a self-paced structure. The final product must use responsive design and be adaptable for use on multiple MOOC platforms.

The award recipient will not hold curriculum or any other rights to the MOOC, which should be published under an open licensing agreement (i.e., *Creative Commons* licensing for open access and repurposing as an Open Educational Resource (OER)). The format and settings are required to be in English.

A plan for testing, launching, eliciting feedback, troubleshooting, and evaluating the MOOC must be included, and reporting must take into account issues such as usability, usefulness of content, technical functionality, as well as the successfulness in meeting the primary goal of building capacity to expand U.S. study abroad.

All applications must be submitted by U.S. public or private non-profit organizations, meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

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

The most competitive solicitations will include written letters of intent with potential MOOC content creators such as professor(s), presenter(s), and/or virtual speaker(s). Additionally, the U.S. Department of State will expect a description of the applicant’s overall capacity for content creation, design, and maintenance of the proposed MOOC.

### **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.

**Background:** It is imperative that the next generation of leaders understands and can operate within the political and economic landscape of the globalized 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through studying abroad, U.S. students gain critical experiences and perspectives and begin to establish networks that enhance their individual prospects in the global marketplace and their future potential as global problem-solvers. According to Open Doors—an annual international and U.S. student mobility report, that is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and administered by the Institute of International Education—less than ten percent of U.S. undergraduate students study abroad before they graduate despite the many benefits of study abroad. Data on U.S. participants in study abroad programs, their destination countries and their fields of study also indicates an often narrowly-defined population of whom the majority go to a limited area of the world.

With this NOFO, ECA seeks to engage a diverse array of faculty and administrators at U.S. higher education institutions with the goal of expanding the institutional capacity for study abroad at a national level. This MOOC should provide these individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary to make informed and strategic decisions on the best types of study abroad programming for their home institutions and the best ways to implement programming that maintains high academic standards, provides sufficient logistical and student support, and is inclusive of diverse student bodies on their campuses. A successful MOOC will provide an informational and training resource that encourages and enables a broad array of U.S. higher educational institutions to successfully expand study abroad opportunities for their students in a manner consistent with the academic and student body needs of their institutions.

### **KEY ACTIVITIES**

**Target Population:** The resultant MOOC developed from this NOFO should be a resource for U.S. higher education institutions of all types and at all levels of developing and implementing study abroad. The content should promote study abroad in a manner that is inclusive of all types of institutions, a diversity of student and faculty participants, and an approach that encourages strategic selection of international destinations for study abroad that takes advantage of all world regions and the diversity of countries, peoples, cultures and languages. The course may be used as an initial training resource for staff newly appointed to a study abroad position or for retraining of even the most experienced

administrators, including those with a broad portfolio that includes international programs among other responsibilities.

The course must be available to a national audience of professors, administrators, and student counsellors from colleges and universities. Certain components/modules may prove beneficial to international partners of U.S. colleges and universities and should be designed in such a way as to encourage broad participation.

**Technical Design:** For maximum flexibility with respect to participation of various higher education institutions, the course must have “on demand” availability, i.e., a “start anytime” enrollment and a self-paced design. Efforts should be taken by the recipient to develop a course that is general enough for wide appeal, provides a range of options in the curriculum to allow users to customize their own learning experience, and is broadly accessible as a digital resource. The course must exist as a single, cohesive entity, but with individual, self-contained modules.

The MOOC should be entirely self-contained, and be created in a highly professional quality that meets MOOC industry standards. The final product must be adaptable for use on multiple MOOC platforms, and the course must also have the adaptability for placement on other relevant platforms and/or potentially hosted on the ECA website. The MOOC must also be easy to update and modify. Applicants are encouraged to draw upon existing, openly-licensed materials in addition to newly created content. The MOOC itself should be published under an open licensing agreement (i.e., *Creative Commons* licensing for open access in-line with OERs).

The course content, format, settings, videos and any other components must be presented in English. Additionally all audio-visual components must meet industry standards and Section 508 Standards for Electronic and Information Technology for access for people with disabilities, including English language captions for all video components. MOOC designs must also be in HTML5 format, as well as have responsive web design (RWD).

The recipient must provide a user guide, which should include detailed guidance on how to use the MOOC, relevant FAQs, and information on troubleshooting, as appropriate. Additionally the MOOC must have a simple registration process that allows for basic data collection and tracking of usage across key variables, including a confirmation of completion of each component, in addition to the entire course.

**Curriculum Development:** The recipient will design a Study Abroad Capacity Building curriculum that provides a comprehensive overview of options for establishing and expanding high quality study abroad programming at HEIs, including content on programming, implementation and monitoring, as well as logistics, budgetary matters, and issues of participant safety and security.

It is the expectation that the course will serve as a tool for U.S. international education

professionals, study abroad practitioners and respective faculty members/administrators to conduct institutional self-analysis, establish partnerships, and create/evaluate programming, as well as serve as a resource of best practices for HEIs to diversify the student populations and expand the fields of study and host country destinations for study abroad.

The following examples are possible topics for the MOOC curriculum, though other topics may be determined in consultation with ECA:

- Options for Study Abroad Program Design (i.e., third-party administration, faculty/administration-led exchange trips, and/or formal international partnership agreements);
- Building and Maintaining International Partnerships;
- Budgeting and Financial Considerations;
- Legal Aspects of Study Abroad;
- Program Diversity;
- Student Safety and Crisis Management;
- Scholarships and Financial Aid; and/or
- Program Monitoring and Evaluation.

Please note that final curriculum and design must be approved by the U.S. Department of State. Additionally, specific content that may be of interest to a wider population of users (e.g. international partners) may be prioritized both for depth and breadth of content and for early completion and dissemination during the course of the Cooperative Agreement. In this case, the timing and prioritization of the creation and dissemination of content will be determined collaboratively between ECA and the recipient.

**Visual Representation:** The award recipient should coordinate and work in consultation with ECA on the final design of this project. ECA will provide guidance regarding our existing websites’ designs and structures to consider regarding the final “look” of the course.

**Pre-testing:** It is a requirement of this Cooperative Agreement that the recipient proposes and conducts comprehensive testing of the MOOC and all its components in advance of the required launch date to ensure that the MOOC is technically sound and conforms to or exceeds industry standards for use on commonly used devices and platforms. If necessary, the recipient should plan for and implement any and all necessary beta-testing among selected test groups and solicit and respond to feedback in advance of the required launch date. The applicant must provide a full description of procedures in place to ensure a successful launch, as well as plans to troubleshoot issues arising upon and following the launch.

**Dissemination and User Outreach/Tracking:** The award recipient is responsible for, in coordination with ECA, promoting a broad distribution of the MOOC to the widest

possible audience of U.S. college and university study abroad practitioners, faculty and administrators—including community colleges and minority-serving institutions.

The recipient is also responsible for tracking and measuring the MOOC's associated metrics, including content usage (i.e. who has taken the course and the areas of the curriculum they have covered.) The recipient should also propose a feedback mechanism for users to provide input on the course, including technical and content aspects. Information on usage and the users' experience should be reported to ECA on a quarterly basis.

**Updates and Maintenance:** Through the end of the Cooperative Agreement, the recipient must plan for, implement and maintain the MOOC in such a way that it remains an up-to-date study abroad resource for U.S. colleges/universities seeking to develop or enhance their study abroad activities/programs. The recipient is responsible for ensuring the MOOC is hosted on a platform/s where it will remain available without expiration, and for updating curriculum materials, resource links and other online items within the MOOC, including video and other audio-visual availability over the duration of the Cooperative Agreement and in consultation with ECA. The MOOC must have long-term archiving capabilities and be designed in such a way that the MOOC may be transferred to another accepted platform with minimal inconvenience and preserving its on-demand capability.

**MOOC Proposal Format:** Proposals should include a fully detailed narrative, budget and schedule of program milestones. The program design and budget should include:

- an overall macro-plan of the proposed curriculum;
- a proposed timeline/schedule of delivery with benchmarks for content creation, design, testing and launching, including a description of the planned launch methods (e.g. waterfall, agile, etc.) and implementation plan;
- a description of the type of public access and any restrictions on public access, as well as use and re-use of content and materials (note that access must be open access and any licensure agreements should be in line with open access, such as those provided through Creative Commons);
- a technical explanation of plans for the recipient to place the MOOC on a pre-existing MOOC platform (i.e., Coursera, NovoEd, edX, etc.), along with the ability for ECA to host the course and its associated modules on its own platform;
- a plan for the curriculum content development, visual representation and pre-testing;
- an explanation of processes to track and measure content usage, including who has taken the course and the areas of the curriculum they have covered; and
- a detailed plan for promotion and distribution to a broad and diverse audience that ensures a diversity of users throughout a diverse array of higher education institutions and associated organizations, as well as a plan for tracking associated metrics.

**Program Monitoring and Evaluation:** The recipient is responsible for developing a protocol for user authentication and course completion verification including possible participant pre- and post-assessments, data collection and analysis of participation throughout the availability of the course.

The award recipient should also provide quarterly evaluations on topics as determined in consultation with ECA and based on user feedback. The evaluations should include information on the technical and content areas of the MOOC, including such topics as:

- ease of use;
- usefulness of content, including suggestions for missing content;
- perceived usefulness as a training tool;
- likeliness for long-term institutional change; and
- likelihood of meeting the primary goal for increasing study abroad capacity at HEIs across the U.S.

Competitive proposals will include a planned methodology on how to achieve these evaluation points and include an overview of the evaluation and survey documents to be used. Please see section “*D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation*” for additional information on program evaluation.

**Program Dates:** The target date for the final, public launch of the fully completed MOOC will be on or before September 30, 2016—with all design, testing and any initial soft launches accomplished beforehand. The award recipient will have until March 31, 2017 to continue to market and recruit users, evaluate the MOOC, troubleshoot problems and make necessary revisions to the MOOC. The final program evaluation is due on March 31, 2017. The program narrative and financial report should be submitted before 90 days after the end of the cooperative agreement.

**Detailed Statement of Work:** In a Cooperative Agreement the U.S. Study Abroad Branch (ECA/A/S/Q) of the Office of Global Educational Programs is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. The following are the recipient and bureau responsibilities.

Recipient responsibilities for this particular project include:

1. Creation of a single, complete Study Abroad Capacity Building MOOC curriculum with multiple self-contained content modules aimed at the U.S. higher education community;
2. Provision of a self-navigable, start-anytime MOOC with on-demand usability;
3. Selection and use of an appropriate MOOC platform that meets or exceeds industry standards and allows for ease of transferability to another platform and or to the ECA website if necessary;
4. Pre- and post-testing of the MOOC and all components of the MOOC as necessary and appropriate for use on multiple commonly-used devices;

5. Successful launching of the complete MOOC by the stated launch deadline;
6. Promotion, marketing, and distribution of the MOOC to a wide audience among the U.S. higher education community;
7. Solicitation of user feedback following the launch and related troubleshooting and follow-up as needed;
8. Conducting of an evaluation that includes issues of technical functioning, usability and user navigability, curriculum and content, as well as likelihood for institutional change and sustained impact (as per smart evaluation model);
9. Tracking of user registration and content usage;
10. Monitoring and working within the allotted budget;
11. Reporting in a timely manner throughout the period of the agreement and through the final report; and
12. Conferring with ECA throughout the project duration and responding to ECA concerns and recommendations in a timely manner in order to achieve the stated objectives as outlined in this NOFO.

Bureau responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Final approval of the MOOC curriculum design and the final stylistic “look” of the MOOC;
2. Approval of the MOOC technical design;
3. Approval of the program timeline and key personnel;
4. Approval and input on the prioritization of MOOC module development;
5. Review and approval of all program publicity materials and any other public materials, as well as approval of the overall marketing and outreach plans for the MOOC;
6. Approval of decisions related to special circumstances or problems throughout the duration of the program;
7. Approval of the final budget and budget modifications;
8. Conducting periodic reviews of the performance of the program, requesting ad hoc programmatic and/or financial reports as needed; and
9. Conducting an annual performance evaluation/review, with satisfactory performance a condition of continued administration of the program.

**Proposal Contents:** Applicants should submit a complete and thorough proposal describing the program in a convincing and comprehensive manner. Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

Proposals should address succinctly, but completely, the elements described below and must follow all format requirements.

**NOTE:** Proposals submitted through Grants.gov may only be submitted in the following formats:

- Microsoft Word

- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)
- ASCII Text
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images)

Proposals should include the following items under the section headings in the GrantSolutions Application Checklist. All documents should be appropriately and clearly titled.

### **Online Forms**

- SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance"
- SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs
- SF-424B, "Assurances - Non-construction Programs"
- Include other attachments, if applicable, such as indirect agreements, form 990, SF-LLL, etc.

### **Program Narrative**

#### Executive Summary (One page)

In one double-spaced page, provide the following information about the project:

1. Name of organization/participating institutions
2. Beginning and ending dates of the program
3. Proposed program
4. Nature of activity
5. Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources
6. Scope and Goals
  - a. Number and description of participants
  - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
  - c. Geographic diversity of program, both U.S. and overseas
  - d. Topics covered
  - e. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

#### Narrative

In twenty (20) double-spaced, single-sided pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below.

1. Vision (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits);
2. Participating organizations, their roles, and their capacity for the project;
3. Program activities (with separate sections within the narrative to address content/curriculum development; learning system's

technical components; course pre-testing; program advertisement/outreach/recruitment; course hosting, user orientation and service plans; participant monitoring and recipient reporting);

4. Program evaluation plans;
5. Follow-on plans with course participants and for course maintenance and sustainability;
6. Project management plans; and
7. Detailed work plan/time frame to illustrate delivery of MOOC design, implementation, evaluation and sustainability.

**Additional Information to be Submitted (not included in the twenty page narrative).**

- Detailed Budget including fringe benefits rate documentation and NICRA rate documentation.
- Professional bio sketches and resumes/CVs (up to two pages each) for key staff and resumes/CVs of all new staff (up to two pages each)
- A general, suggested outline for the MOOC course
- Calendar of activities/itinerary, if applicable
- Letters of endorsement and/or letter of intent from content creators
- First Time Applicant Attachments, if applicable.

**Please note:** All applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 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.
- Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

**B. Federal Award Information:**

**Type of Award:** Cooperative Agreement

ECA's level of involvement in this program is outlined under the "Detailed Statement of Work."

**Fiscal Year Funds:** FY2015

**Approximate Total Funding:** Up to \$200,000

**Approximate Number of Awards:** One

**Approximate Average Award:** Up to \$200,000

**Floor of Award Range:** None

**Ceiling of Award Range:** \$200,000

**Anticipated Award Date:** August 1, 2015

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** March 31, 2017

**Additional Information:**

This is a one-time only cooperative agreement.

**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 this NOFO 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 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 over \$130,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

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

- ECA reserves the right to be substantially involved in the programming activities of this Cooperative Agreement—above and beyond routine monitoring—with regard to the MOOC curriculum and technical development. Eligible applicants must agree to this collaboration in their proposal and include suggested approval procedures in their narrative and overall program timeline.
- Due to the various responsibilities involved in the design and implementation of this course, the Bureau welcomes the submission of proposals involving sub-recipients. In addition to the primary award recipient, these sub-recipients may be responsible for carrying out specific activities or components of the program. Applications involving sub-recipients must clearly delineate the role each

partnering organization will play and its responsibilities. Letters of commitment from any potential partnering organization(s) must be included.

- Proposals requesting funding for infrastructure development activities, sometimes referred to as “bricks and mortar” support are NOT eligible for consideration under this competition, will be declared technically ineligible and will received no further consideration in the review process.
- No funding is available to send program staff or foreign nationals to conferences or conference-type seminars.
- If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. **Please note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

#### **D.) Application and Submission Information:**

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 U.S. Study Abroad Branch located in the Office of Global Educational Programs, (ECA/A/S/Q), SA-5, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, Tel: 202-632-9265 and Fax: (202) 632-6489, email: [studyabroad@state.gov](mailto:studyabroad@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 Heidi Manley 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 Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

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](http://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:** 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](http://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 Recipient Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday and can be reached at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov) or 1-866-577-0771.

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

**FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY:**

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

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. 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 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

**D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines**

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

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

#### D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

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

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

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it

cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

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

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

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

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

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

**D.3k. Virtual Exchange Component:** ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual

exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our International Exchange Alumni space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

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

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

D.3n. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. Budget requests may not exceed \$200,000. 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 project include the following:

1) **Travel.** Domestic airfare; transit costs; ground transportation costs.

2) **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/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentId=17943&contentType=GSA\\_BASIC](http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentId=17943&contentType=GSA_BASIC).

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

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

Application Deadline Date: **Tuesday, June 2, 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/GetStarted>).

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](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, D.C. 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. Quality of the program idea:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission.
- 2. Program planning:** Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.
- 3. Ability to achieve program objectives:** Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
- 4. 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 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.

**5. Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals.

**6. Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

**7. Project Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.

**8. 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.

**9. Cost-sharing:** Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct and/or in-kind funding contributions.

## **F.) Federal Award Administration Information**

### **F.1. Award Notices:**

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive an Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and 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](http://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](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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://USA Spending.gov) website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

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

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

As part of 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.

### **G. Agency Contacts**

For questions about this announcement, contact: Heidi Manley/Deputy Director, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Study Abroad Branch of the Office of Global Educational Programs, (ECA/A/S/Q), SA-5, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C. Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, TEL: 202-632-9265 and FAX: (202) 632-6489, [studyabroad@state.gov](mailto:studyabroad@state.gov).

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

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

**H. Other Information:**

**Notice:**

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

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

March 26, 2015

