

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY2015 TechWomen Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAPEC-15-020

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.415

Application Deadline: May 4, 2015

Executive Summary: The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the FY 2015 TechWomen program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to conduct a professional mentorship exchange programs. Applicants should plan to demonstrate the capacity to recruit and select a total of approximately 90 women from select countries in Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East to participate in a five- to six-week peer mentoring program in the United States. The award recipient will be responsible for arranging appropriate and meaningful mentorships for all the participants at U.S.-based science and technology companies, and for monitoring the safety and well-being of the participants while they are on the program. The mentoring experience will focus on advancing the status of professional women in the fields of science and technology through project-based mentorships, networking opportunities, and enhancement activities. Funding will also support activities in the participants' home countries that encourage the interest of girls and university-age women in science and technology-based careers, and that engage young women using technology in their professions.

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.

It is the Bureau's intent to award one cooperative agreement (with one base year plus two non-competitive continuations) for an estimated total amount of \$7,500,000. Please see section B.) Federal Award Information, below for additional details.

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.

Purpose: Since 2011, TechWomen has supported women engaged in the fields of science and technology from specific countries by providing mentorships in the United States with professional women representing leading science and technology companies and institutions. With FY 2015 funding, TechWomen will link approximately 90 emerging female leaders who have at least two years of professional experience in the field of science and/or technology, with female peer mentors in the United States for a five- to six-week mentorship program.

The below listed countries are representative of countries expected to participate in FY 2015. Note: ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program's needs and availability of funds. In addition, the Bureau reserves the right to adjust and/or add additional countries and/or regions should conditions change in a partner country and/or if other countries and/or regions are identified as viable alternatives and/or Department priorities.

- AF: Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Zimbabwe
- SCA: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan
- NEA: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and Yemen

At their own expense, several of the American mentors will travel to at least two of the foreign participants' home countries in Africa, Central Asia and/or the Middle East (the selected countries should be in at least two different geographic regions) after the conclusion of the U.S.-based program to offer skills development sessions and workshops for a broader range of local participants, including young girls and undergraduate women. The program should have an impact beyond individual satisfaction with the mentorship, and serve as the basis for an international professional support network for women working in the field of science and technology both within and outside of the participants' home countries. To this end, TechWomen participants will develop action plans while in the United States to take on projects that benefit others in their communities after they return home. Participants will also have access to the community of alumni from other State Department-sponsored exchange programs.

Applicants must identify the U.S. and foreign organizations and individuals with whom they are proposing to collaborate to recruit and select participants overseas through an open, merit-based competition, to secure mentorships in the United States, and to implement follow-on workshops conducted by American mentors in certain of the participants' home countries. Proposals should contain letters of commitment or support from any partner organizations with which the applicant plans to work to secure the mentorships, and for the follow-on workshops overseas. A description of any previous cooperative activities with these partner organizations should be included in the proposal, along with information about their mission, activities, and accomplishments. Applicants should clearly outline and describe the roles and responsibilities of all partner organizations in terms of project logistics, management and oversight. Proposals should also include letters of intent and/or commitment from U.S.-based science, technology and

innovation companies that would be willing to host a TechWomen mentee from Africa, Central Asia and/or the Middle East.

The Bureau is particularly interested in recruiting and establishing suitable mentorships for women engaged in “green” science and technology fields, such as renewable resources, water conservation, and alternate energy sources. In their proposals, applicants should demonstrate an awareness of this interest, as well as a willingness to promote and meet the goal of supporting green science and technology.

Competitive proposals for TechWomen will include the following:

- A description of the recruitment and merit-based selection processes for approximately 90 mentees from Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Yemen and Zimbabwe;
- A description of U.S.-based activities, including the securing of mentorships and mentors in American companies; monitoring and support of participants during the mentorship; pre-departure information, a group arrival orientation; and a debriefing/evaluation session at the conclusion of the program in Washington, DC;
- A description of how the applicant will ensure that participants develop and execute action plans to use the TechWomen experience to benefit their communities within a specified time after they return home from the United States;
- A description of the workshops, seminars and/or other activities conducted by the American mentors who voluntarily travel overseas after the U.S.-based mentorships have concluded;
- Resumes of experienced staff who have demonstrated a commitment to implement and monitor international exchange projects and ensure outcomes;
- A comprehensive plan to evaluate how the program’s outcomes will achieve the specific objectives described in the narrative that includes a data collection strategy to demonstrate the program’s effectiveness both in the United States and all participating regions overseas;
- A proposed timeline detailing TechWomen activities and how they support the program’s goals;
- Letters of commitment from U.S. companies to serve as possible host mentoring sites.
- Letters of commitment from any proposed partner organizations/subrecipients that will assist the applicant in implementing TechWomen. Applicants should clearly outline and describe the roles and responsibilities of all proposed partner organizations/subrecipients in terms of project logistics, management and oversight;

- A post-award plan that demonstrates how both the mentors and mentees can maintain contacts initiated during the program, as well as with past participants; and
- A budget reflecting a cooperative agreement request not to exceed \$2,500,000 for the FY 2015 TechWomen program with the designated countries in Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East.

U.S. Embassy Involvement:

In consultation with ECA, the award recipient must actively engage the relevant U.S. Embassies in the final selection of all TechWomen participants.

Before submitting a proposal, all applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with the program officer at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in Washington, DC, in charge of TechWomen: Julia Gomez-Nelson; (202) 632-6409 (tel); (202) 632-9355 (fax); e-mail: nelsonjg2@state.gov.

Project Details:

Audience: Participants will be women (ages approximately 23-43) from Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Yemen and Zimbabwe who are engaged or rising in professional careers that require significant expertise/knowledge of science or technology and/or innovative application of these skills, and who already are, or show promise of being, role models for others in their countries, particularly for women. “Technology” should be interpreted broadly to include – but not be limited to – the fields of engineering, education, and business. Participants must have at least two years of work experience in a field that explicitly and directly involves and applies science and/or technology in meeting professional goals. All participants must be proficient in written and spoken English.

Each participant will be matched with one female U.S. mentor who is a mid-level professional at a host company. Each participant will also have a female U.S. mentor to help ease the participant’s adjustment to, and familiarize her with, American society.

Successful applicants will clearly demonstrate the capacity to achieve the following:

- Identify qualified and established partner organizations/offices overseas to recruit applicants to TechWomen, in consultation with ECA and the relevant U.S. Embassies and Consulates.
- Conduct a comprehensive selection process of foreign mentees from eligible countries, and provide them with the opportunity for meaningful and effective professional development and collaboration, as well as cultural awareness through project-based mentorships with American peers for up to 6 weeks, and through activities conducted in select countries overseas after the conclusion of the U.S.-based program.
- Identify U.S.-based companies and individuals with whom collaboration on mentorships and networking opportunities is possible.

- Promote mutual understanding and partnerships between key professional groups in the United States and counterpart groups in eligible countries.
- Create sustainable professional mentoring relationships between U.S. and foreign participants, as well as with past TechWomen participants.
- Expand the network of technology professionals in eligible countries.

Ideal Program Model:

- A five- to six-week U.S.-based program that includes a group orientation at the beginning of the program in the United States; a mentorship with a peer mentor at the work place, and a separate mentor for cultural/social activities outside the office; a debriefing/evaluation session at the conclusion of the U.S.-based mentorship; and additional educational and cultural programming, as appropriate. According to their expertise and interests, participants should be placed individually or in small groups in companies located within one tech hub area of the United States that will afford them a support network. Based on each participant's interests and goals, the award recipient will ensure that the mentorship is designed around a specific project or effort in a host company that is clearly relevant to the participant's professional goals.
- Robust engagement with the private sector to expand networking opportunities and secure mentorship hosts in small-, medium- and large-sized companies.
- A two- to three-day debriefing session after the conclusion of the mentorship experience for all the TechWomen participants and other guests in Washington, DC, that will include handling all logistical arrangements for a reception at the Department of State. The award recipient will be responsible for the costs of the reception and for all travel by the mentees (from Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East) to Washington, DC, for the debriefing, as well as all housing and transportation for the mentees in Washington, DC.
- A four- to seven-day project in at least two of the participants' home countries in Africa, Central Asia and/or the Middle East (the selected countries should be in at least two different geographic regions) for U.S. mentors to conduct/participate in seminars, workshops, on-site consultancies, and other types of activities with the goal of reinforcing the mentorship experience and creating a wider network of women who are established in these professions, or who aspire to do so. The award recipient will be responsible for all logistical arrangements to carry out these follow-on projects overseas. During the projects, the award recipient should arrange two-three workshops and/or interactive presentations for at least 25 local girls (within the age range of 12-16) each to expose them to role models and insight into what it means to be a female leader in a science or technological field. At the end of each overseas project, there should be a debriefing and evaluation session with the participants. The award recipient will be responsible for making all international and domestic travel arrangements.
- Specific ideas and approaches to maintaining contact and networking opportunities between the participants themselves, and between them and their U.S. mentors and host institutions/organizations.

- The publication (both in print and online) of all program materials for TechWomen designed and arranged in collaboration with ECA and the respective U.S. Embassies. Relevant materials include those to advertise and promote the program (both in the United States and overseas), orientation materials, mentoring guidelines, and materials for activities conducted in the participants' home countries. Materials and website designs must be approved by ECA prior to publication and/or distribution (allowing ECA a minimum of three weeks for this review process). The award recipient must be prepared to coordinate all public announcements regarding TechWomen (including press releases, website updates, media notes, etc.) with ECA's Office of Public Affairs and Strategic Communications. Printed materials and websites must prominently display the TechWomen program logo and the U.S. Department of State seal. All official documents and materials developed for promotional purposes must use the TechWomen logo and acknowledge the U.S. Department of State's role as program sponsor. Please note: All materials and website resources paid for by funding through the cooperative agreement will become the property of the Department of State.
- Collecting, updating and making available for consumption by the public and Department representatives narrative stories, anecdotes and any quantifiable data that illustrate the impact and multiplier effect of TechWomen both overseas and the United States.

ECA envisions the approximate Dates of TechWomen for the base year to be as Follows:

- *October 2015 – February 2016:* Recruitment and selection of foreign participants. Recruitment campaign for U.S. hosting institutions.
- *March 2016 – June 2016:* Securing U.S.-based mentors and host sites.
- *July 2016 – September 2016:* Visa issuance for selected mentees, and pre-departure preparations.
- *September 2016 – November 2016:* Travel to the United States by foreign participants for orientation, placement at mentorship sites, and a debriefing in Washington, DC (that includes a reception at the Department of State).
- *January 2017 – March 2017:* U.S. mentors travel to select countries overseas to conduct seminars, workshops and/or other activities with TechWomen alumnae. Final evaluations of the program conducted.

Additional information:

All projects proposed for the mentorship should encourage both the American mentors and the foreign mentees to learn from each other and to build productive relationships.

As needed, ECA will work with the award recipient to finalize host company placements for the TechWomen mentees; however, only applicants who can demonstrate a strong private sector network to secure placements through their own resources will be deemed competitive.

In a cooperative agreement, ECA/PE/CE is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring.

ECA/PE/CE's activities and responsibilities for this program are as follows:

- Collaborating with the award recipient on the outreach and selection of mentors and host sites;
- Approval of host institutions and organizations;
- Review and approval of all program publicity and other materials;
- Final selection of participants;
- Assisting with SEVIS-related issues;
- Assisting with participant emergencies;
- Liaising with relevant U.S. Embassies and country desk officers at the Department of State, particularly in terms of recruitment and selection efforts;
- Issuing DS-2019 forms to participants;
- Enrolling participants in the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) for the duration of the program, issue health benefits identifications cards, and provide instructions on host claim forms;
- Working with the award recipient to publicize the program through various media outlets;
- Assisting in arrangements for the debriefing session in Washington, DC, and the reception at the Department of State; and
- Monitoring and evaluating the program, as necessary, through site visits or debriefing sessions.
- Performing an annual performance evaluation/review. Satisfactory performance is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all option years.

Proposal narratives should include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional non-competitive continuations (formerly referred to as option years), pending successful performance and the availability of funds. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base year program, with the understanding that the program design, duration and participant numbers would be similar when/if the subsequent two non-competitive continuations are exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if a non-competitive continuation will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all non-competitive continuations.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION:

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

Fiscal Year Funds: **FY2015** - \$2,500,000 (Base year);

FY2016 - \$2,500,000 (Non-competitive continuation year one);

FY2017 - \$2,500,000 (Non-competitive continuation year two),

Approximate Total Funding: \$7,500,000.

This figure represents base year plus two Non-Competitive Continuation years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Floor of Award Range: None.

Ceiling of Award Range: \$2,500,000.

Approximate Average Award: \$2,500,000.

Anticipated Award Date: August 31, 2015

Anticipated Project Completion Date: April 30, 2019.

This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award – one base year plus two non-competitive continuation years.

Additional Information: A Cooperative agreement will be awarded for a period of 20 months (base year) with Non-Competitive Continuations (formerly referred to as option years) for two additional 20 month periods (non-competitive continuations years one and two). ECA will notify the recipient of our intention to exercise or not to exercise a Non-Competitive Continuation at least 90 days in advance of expiration of the current year after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to exercise a Non-Competitive Continuation will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION:

C.1. Eligible applicants: Applications may be submitted by 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 experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award, in an amount up to **\$2,500,000** to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program.

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

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

- Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition.
If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. **Please note:** 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 Julia Gómez-Nelson in the Office of Citizen Exchanges (ECA/PE/C) SA-5, 3rd Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, Tel. (202) 632-6049, Fax (202) 632-9355, Email: NelsonJG2@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 Julia Gómez-Nelson 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 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

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.

For competitions that will be renewed through a Non-Competitive Continuation (formerly referred to as Option Years) applicants must submit:

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

To exercise the Non-Competitive Continuation (formerly referred to as Option Years) mechanism the recipient will be required to submit:

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

The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will:

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

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

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

- 1) International and domestic air fares; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs and airline baggage and seat fees. 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 programs.
- 2) Per Diem. For U.S.-based programming, organizations should refer to 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 for overseas activities can be accessed at:

http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78

- 3) Return Travel Allowance. A return travel allowance of approximately \$70 for each foreign participant may be included in the budget. The allowance may be used for incidental expenses incurred during international travel.
- 4) Housing in the United States. The award recipient will be responsible for providing clean, safe and reasonably located housing for the TechWomen mentees during their stay in the United States.
- 5) Orientation Costs. The award recipient will provide to posts overseas appropriate informational materials about TechWomen and the logistics involved in traveling to the United States. This information will be used by posts to conduct pre-departure orientations for the TechWomen mentees in each country. The award recipient will itself conduct a comprehensive orientation for all the TechWomen mentees upon their arrival in the United States.
- 6) Accident and Sickness Insurance. The TechWomen mentees will be covered under the terms of a U.S. Department of State-sponsored health insurance policy. The premium is paid by the U.S. Department of State directly to the insurance company.
- 7) Consultants. Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Daily honoraria may not exceed \$250 per day. Subcontracting organizations may also be used, in which case the written agreement between the prospective award recipient and the subcontractor should be included in the proposal. Subcontracts should be itemized in the budget.
- 8) Room Rental. Room rental may not exceed \$250 per day.
- 9) Materials Development. Your proposal may contain costs to purchase, develop and translate materials for participants (both mentors and mentees).
- 10) Wire Transfer Fees. When necessary, applicants may include costs to transfer funds to partner organizations overseas. Award recipients are urged to research applicable taxes that may be imposed on these transfers by host governments.
- 11) In-country Travel Costs for Visa Processing Purposes. Given the requirements associated with obtaining J-1 visas for ECA-supported participants, applicants should include costs for any travel associated with visa interviews or DS-2019 pick-up.
- 12) Debriefing and Reception in Washington, DC. After the conclusion of the U.S.-based mentorships, the TechWomen mentees will take part in a two- to three-day debriefing and reception at the Department of State in Washington, DC. The award recipient will be responsible for all costs involved in the debriefing, including the transportation for the mentees to Washington, as well as their

housing and per diem while there. The award recipient will also be responsible for all expenditures incurred for the reception.

- 13) Costs involved in TechWomen overseas follow-on programming (four-to-seven day projects) in at least two countries in Africa, Central Asia and/or the Middle East (the selected countries should be in at least two different geographic regions), including accommodations and travel costs.
- 14) Administrative Costs. Costs necessary for the effective administration of the program may include salaries for recipient organization employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the Application Package. While there is no rigid ratio of administrative to program costs, applicants are strongly encouraged to keep administrative costs as low as possible. Proposals should show strong administrative cost sharing contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner and other sources. Please also include in the administrative portion of your budget plans to travel to Washington, DC, to meet with your program officer within the first 45 days after the grant has been awarded.

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

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

Application Deadline Date: Monday, May 4, 2015

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

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

Email: support@grants.gov

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

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

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

D.3q Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition. If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. **Please note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

D.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:** The proposal should exhibit originality, substance, and precision. The program plan should state the relevance of your project to the U.S. Department of State's foreign policy goals. Program objectives should be stated clearly and should reflect your organization's expertise in the subject area. Detailed agenda and plans should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. Your proposal should include a detailed timeline for accomplishing program activities.
- 2. Institutional Capacity/Track Record:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful international 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.
- 3. Cost Effectiveness and Cost Sharing:** The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries, honoraria and subcontracts for services, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Your proposal should maximize cost sharing through other private sector support, as well as institutional direct funding and in-kind contributions.
- 4. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Achievable and relevant features should be cited in both program administration (selection of mentees and mentors, program venue, and program evaluation) and program content (orientation and wrap-up sessions, program meetings, resource materials, and follow-up activities). You should refer to the Bureau's Diversity, Freedom, and Democracy Guidelines in the PSI for guidance.
- 5. Post-Grant Activities:** The proposal should provide a plan to conduct activities after the Bureau-funded project has concluded in order to ensure that Bureau-supported programs are not isolated events. Post-grant activities must be funded by contributions

from the applicant or sources outside the Bureau. Costs for these activities should not appear in the proposal budget, but should be outlined/explained in the proposal narrative.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation: Proposals should include a detailed plan to monitor and evaluate the program. How your organization plans to ensure the safety and well-being of the mentees while they are in the United States should be clearly explained. Competitive evaluation plans will describe how applicant organizations will measure the project's success at meeting program objectives in quantitative terms, and should include draft data collection instruments such as surveys and questionnaires. Your proposal should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. ECA is especially interested in the results of project activities both in terms of the impact on audiences as well as on participants. It is the applicant's responsibility to inform the Bureau of exchange activity results and changes to the program plan and/or project time-line.

7. Stewardship: Your proposal should address how you will utilize innovative tools, low-carbon technologies, and socially responsible approaches to program implementation, including Web-based and other technologies, to reduce the program's carbon footprint and be a faithful steward of federal resources.

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.

The following additional requirements apply to this project:

For assistance awards involving the Palestinian Authority, West Bank, and Gaza:

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

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact (insert program office contact name, telephone and e-mail) for additional information.

F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

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

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

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

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

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

Mandatory:

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

- 4.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.
- 5.) Because the Competition will allow for the exercise of Non-Competitive Continuations (NCC) (formerly referred to as Option Years), applicants must be placed on a mandatory quarterly program and financial reporting cycle. The due dates for these reports will be included in the final assistance award document. The program and financial reports must demonstrate substantial progress by addressing progress towards the original approved goals and objectives, relative activities and events, and supporting fiscal data. The reports will be reviewed by both the assigned Grant Officer and Program Officer.

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.

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: **Julia Gómez-Nelson**, U.S. Department of State, **Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C/CU, SA-5, 3rd Floor**, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, (202) 632-6409 (tel); (202) 632-9355 (fax); nelsonJG2@state.gov.

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

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

H. OTHER INFORMATION:**Notice:**

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

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

February 20, 2015