

PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

FY 2016 Future Leaders Exchange Program: Host Family and School Placement and Monitoring Component

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAPEC-16-009

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division

The Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX) Program for Academic Year 2016-2017 comprises a Host Family and School Placement and Monitoring Component, hereinafter referred to as the Placement Component, which is the subject of this Funding Opportunity Number, and the Organizational Components, which is the subject of another award.

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued by the Youth Programs Division, Office of Citizen Exchanges, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) for the 2016-2017 Academic Year FLEX Placement Component. Proposals must conform to the NOFO, the Guidelines stated in this document, and the standard Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Applications not adhering to the conditions set forth herein may be deemed technically ineligible. These guidelines are specific to the program mentioned above and are IN ADDITION TO the Standard Guidelines outlined in the PSI. If there is a perceived disparity between the standard and program specific Guidelines and the program information supplied in the accompanying NOFO, the NOFO is to be the dominant reference.

I. STATEMENT OF WORK

A. Overview

The FLEX program provides approximately 880 scholarships each year for secondary school students (ages 15- 18.5 years at the start of the program) from Eurasia to spend one academic year in the United States. To date, approximately 24,000 Eurasian high school students have spent an academic year in the United States living with host families and attending secondary schools. These students are alumni of the FLEX and A-SMYLE programs, which the Office is consolidating into one program under the FLEX program brand name in FY16. FLEX was created in 1992 and A-SMYLE was created in 2005. The program engages youth and enhances relations between the United States and the countries of Eurasia. Students live with host families, attend high school, engage in activities to learn about American society and values, acquire leadership skills, and help educate Americans about their countries and cultures.

Placement Component award funding is also intended to sponsor local activities that will enhance the students' knowledge and awareness regarding American style democracy and civil society. This solicitation and the activities to which it refers apply only to FLEX program students who will be recruited from among following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia,

Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine. In addition, the Bureau might recruit students from Russia, Belarus, and Uzbekistan (previous FLEX countries) for the program in the future. Information about the FLEX Program can be found at: <http://www.exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/future-leaders-exchange>

Note: The Bureau 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 should conditions change in a partner country and/or if other countries and/or regions are identified as viable alternatives and/or Department priorities.

FLEX Program Participants: FLEX Program participants are 15-18.5 years old at the start of their program. Under the terms of their visas, they must return to their home countries following the conclusion of their exchange program in the United States. Placement Components award recipients (hereinafter referred to as Placement Organizations, or POs) are expected to assist the State Department in enforcing this regulation.

Finalists for the Program are selected on the basis of merit. Applicants undergo a series of exams and are interviewed in person for evaluation of their ability to adjust to new cultures and English language proficiency. Although most applicants have good English comprehension, speaking, and writing skills, a small number of those accepted into the Program (approximately 10% of each Placement Organization's overall student number) will need English language enhancement training and/or independence training after arriving in host communities. The Department of State seeks to include students of diverse national and ethnic backgrounds and students with disabilities. Finalists also undergo rigorous medical screening.

Distribution of Students: Your proposal must include a plan to place and monitor a minimum of 20 students, although recipients are encouraged to place more than 20 students; there is no maximum number. Under the Placement awards, Placement Organizations (POs) will accept and place students assigned by the Organizational Components grantee. Your organization's students may come from any of the previously mentioned countries, or others as determined by the Bureau. Approval of final allocations to all POs will be made by ECA.

Organizational Components: Overseas operations for the FLEX program are conducted under a separate grant for the FLEX Organizational Components. The Organizational Components grantee is responsible for recruitment and selection of students; preparation of cross-cultural materials; pre-departure orientation; international travel from home to host community and return; facilitation of ongoing communication between the natural parents and the placement organization, as needed; maintenance of a student database; and ongoing follow-up with alumni after they return home.

Many key activities of the PO will be conducted in direct coordination with the Organizational Components grantee. It is imperative for the success of the FLEX program that your organization work efficiently and openly with both ECA and the Organizational Components grantee throughout the duration of the award. The Organizational Components grantee is responsible for the coordination of many overarching activities involved in the implementation of the FLEX Program. Each PO is provided the *FLEX Operational Guidelines*, a manual that gives instructions for these

overlapping roles that POs must follow for the smooth coordination of tasks.

Disability Component: Students with disabilities are recruited by the Organizational Components grantee along with all other students. Students with disabilities must meet the same standards as all other applicants, but may receive reasonable accommodations for testing. Your organization may be asked to place, monitor, and support students with disabilities. The Organizational Component award recipient will conduct training and support for students with disabilities and their Placement Organizations. Additional information is provided in the section on students with disabilities below.

Civic Education Component: All FLEX students will have the opportunity to apply to attend the Civic Education Workshop, which is a one-week workshop, generally held in March, in Washington, DC. Approximately 100 students will be selected to participate. Your proposal should not contain information about this workshop, but should include confirmation that you will notify your students of the opportunity. Award recipients will receive additional information from the Organizational Components grantee about how your students can apply for the workshop.

B. Organization Responsibilities and Oversight

The Office of Citizen Exchanges in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the Department of State is the designated Exchange Visitor Program (J-1 Visa) sponsor with ultimate responsibility for the FLEX Program. All Placement Organizations - including their employees, officers, agents, and third parties involved in the administration of FLEX - receiving cooperative agreements to administer the Placement Component will be considered under the terms of such grants to be third parties “cooperating with or assisting the sponsor [i.e., The Office of Citizen Exchanges] in the conduct of the sponsor’s program” (22 CFR Section 62.2).

Placement Organizations are not required to be designated as J-1 Visa sponsors under this award. However, as third parties, all Placement Organizations are required to follow J-1 Visa regulations.

Because the actions of such third parties are imputed to the designated sponsor, the Bureau expects that all Placement Organizations (including their employees, officers, agents, and third parties involved in the administration of FLEX) will both comply with the regulations and requirements of the J-1 Visa program and render all necessary assistance to enable the Office of Citizen Exchanges to be in full compliance with the same. Accordingly, Placement Organizations must ensure their “employees, officers, agents, and third parties involved in the administration of [FLEX grants and cooperative agreements] are adequately qualified, appropriately trained, and comply with the Exchange Visitor Program regulations” (22 CFR 62.9(f) (2)).

Relevant portions of the regulations governing the administration of an exchange visitor program are set forth in 22 CFR 62.25(d)(15), Program administration: “Sponsors must ensure that all officers, employees, representatives, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf ... adhere to all regulatory provisions set forth in this Part and all additional terms and conditions governing program administration that the Department may impose.”

C. Responsibilities of the Placement Organization

The FLEX program responsibilities of the Placement Organizations include:

1. **Materials**
 - Preparing and disseminating PO materials
2. **Host Families**
 - Recruiting, screening and selecting host families prior to the students' departures from their home countries
3. **Host Schools**
 - Securing enrollment for the students in accredited secondary schools prior to the students' departures from their home countries
4. **Clustering**
 - Placing students in clusters wherever possible
5. **Language Programming**
 - Implementing pre-program specialized English language programming for pre-selected students who require focused preparation for their academic year in cooperation with the FLEX Organizational Component recipient, which will fund language programming.
6. **Students with Disabilities**
 - Placing and supporting at least one student with a disability
 - Providing reasonable accommodations to support assigned students with disabilities in cooperation with the FLEX Organizational Component recipient, which will fund accommodations costs.
7. **Trainings/Orientations**
 - Conducting FLEX-specific training(s) for Local Coordinators¹, volunteers, and Placement Organization staff
 - Conducting FLEX-specific pre-arrival orientations for host families
 - Conducting FLEX-specific post-arrival orientations for all FLEX participants
 - Conducting FLEX-specific mid-year orientation programs for all FLEX participants
 - Conducting FLEX-specific re-entry trainings for all FLEX participants
8. **Participant Monitoring**
 - Monitoring of students, host families and Local Coordinators to ensure the health, safety and well-being of participants
 - Conducting site visits to 20% of your FLEX students in their host communities.
 - Communicating student issues that could affect student health, safety, or well-being to the FLEX Program Office
 - Responding to data requests from ECA and the Organizational Components grantee in a timely manner
9. **Enhancements**
 - Providing enhancement activities to further support the program goals and facilitate leadership skills development
10. **Community Service**
 - Establishing guidelines for community service requirements
11. **Insurance**
 - Providing medical insurance for the students or participating in the U.S. Department of State's ASPE benefit plan

¹ Local Coordinator refers to the person in the community who will be the exchange student's primary point of contact. Local Coordinators are sometimes referred to as the community coordinator, area representative or local representative.

12. Performance Reports

- Reporting quarterly the organization's successes and challenges in achieving program goals and outcomes
- Final reporting of all activities during the award period

13. Evaluation

- Evaluating students to assess impact

14. Department of State Web Resources

- Providing information for hosting outreach
- Training and registering participants on Department of State web resources

ECA Activities and Responsibilities: In a cooperative agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. ECA activities and responsibilities for the FLEX program include:

- 1) Providing advice and assistance in the execution of all program components.
- 2) Serving as liaison between the award recipients and personnel within the Department of State, including ECA, the regional bureaus, and overseas posts.
- 3) Monitoring and evaluating the program and its participants through communication by email, phone, and site visits.
- 4) Issuing DS-2019 forms for the participants. All participants will travel on a U.S. government designation for the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program.
- 5) Creating and updating SEVIS status; maintaining all SEVIS records.
- 6) Hosting an annual meeting for all award recipients to provide program guidance.
- 7) Approving program promotional materials and website information.
- 8) Representing the U.S. Government as the program sponsor at exchange events, program events, and orientations.
- 9) Publicizing program highlights and responding to Congressional and Department requests for information.
- 10) Performing an annual performance evaluation/review. Satisfactory performance is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of Non-Competitive Continuations (NCCs).

II.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

A. Detailed Guidance Related to Responsibilities Listed Above

1. Materials

Pre-Departure Orientation Materials: Placement Organizations must prepare student materials that will be distributed by the Organizational Components grantee during the Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO). Materials must be received by the Organizational Components grantee by May 1, 2016 for distribution at PDO. All required materials are listed in 22 CFR 62. Student handbooks or promotional handouts may be more appropriate to distribute after students have arrived in the United States. All materials must identify students as FLEX students and must include information on the U.S. Department of State as the program sponsor.

Promotional Materials: All official documents and materials developed for promotional purposes must acknowledge the U.S. Department of State’s role as program sponsor. Where appropriate, documents will include the American flag and the State Department seal. The Bureau will retain copyright use and may distribute materials related to this program.

2. Host Families

Placement Organizations’ practices and procedures for recruiting, screening, and selecting host families and placing FLEX participants with host families must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25.

Proposals that demonstrate compliance with these regulations and illustrate your organization’s oversight over local coordinators will be deemed more competitive. Please contact the FLEX Program Office if you have any questions regarding how the regulations apply to FLEX participants.

3. Host Schools

Placement Organizations’ practices and procedures for placing FLEX participants in accredited public or private secondary educational institutions must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25.

With respect to the placement of FLEX participants, the Office of Citizen Exchanges provides the following further guidance that POs must follow in placing students in host schools:

- POs should encourage school administrators to utilize students as resources in the classroom and the community, including discussing options for extra-curricular activities that correlate with Program goals (e.g., Student Council, Junior Achievement, Future Business Leaders of America, volunteer opportunities).

Due to unique cultural sensitivities, POs must obtain ECA concurrence before placing students in religious, private, and non-traditional public schools. For schools with a religious affiliation, student and natural parent approval is also required. Home schooling is not an acceptable option.

4. Clustering

ECA encourages placements in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in a wide range of rural, urban, and suburban settings. Placement Organizations that choose to cluster all or most of their students will be deemed more competitive. A cluster is defined as a minimum of three ECA-funded scholarship students² who live within reasonable proximity and can be brought together for FLEX program activities (e.g., orientations; re-entry training, and program enhancement activities).

Applicants are expected to cluster at least 60% of their placements. Multiple local coordinators may work together to form a cluster. Applicants must describe how local staff and volunteers will provide non-clustered exchange students the benefits of orientations and enhancement activities.

5. Language Programming

Your proposal should describe in the narrative appropriate activities for approximately ten percent (10%) of your students who will be identified as needing additional English language support. All

²ECA-funded scholarship students are identified as those participating in FLEX, the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX), and the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) programs.

language programs should focus on conversational English so students will be better prepared to take part in classroom activities and discussions at the start of the school year. The Language Program should be individualized to meet each student's specific needs.

The requirements of the Language Program are:

- The Language Program should take place when students arrive, preferably before school starts, to give students additional language help from the start of their program, and should continue as long as needed.
- The Language Program curriculum should focus on oral/aural proficiency, including conversation practice, comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary development, and sentence patterns. Less emphasis should be placed on grammar, as the English curriculum of schools in Eurasia is primarily grammar-based.
- The Language Program should consist of a minimum of four hours of intensive instruction each day for no fewer than 15 days.
- The Language Program costs will be funded by the FLEX Organizational Components recipient.
- POs may secure temporary host families for students participating in a Language Program when the program takes place in a different geographic locale than the schools in which these students have been enrolled for the academic year. Temporary host families must be fully vetted pursuant to the host family screening and selecting guidelines, set forth above.
- POs will arrange and provide student transportation from temporary to permanent communities, as required.

6. Students with Disabilities

The FLEX program has provided special assistance to about 250 Eurasian students with disabilities since its inception (approximately 10-20 students per year). Your proposal must include a plan for placing and monitoring students with disabilities. Separate funding is provided through the FLEX Organizational Components to help support students with disabilities and their Placement Organizations. You will coordinate necessary accommodation expenses with the Organizational Components recipient. Responsibilities of the Organizational Components implementer include:

- Contacting disability organizations for hosting outreach.
- Conducting a 3-to-4 day Preparatory Workshop for students immediately upon their arrival to educate students on the laws and resources available for people with disabilities in the United States. Note: The Organizational Components implementer will be responsible for travel to and from the workshop.
- Thoroughly assessing each student's condition and specific needs during the Preparatory Workshop and providing an assessment report to the appropriate Placement Organization.
- Conducting an Inclusion Workshop for Placement Organization representatives for sharing best practices of working with students with disabilities and educating representatives regarding disability issues. Note: The Organizational Component implementer will be responsible for travel to and from the workshop.
- Providing Placement Organizations with support and resources throughout the year.

- Providing funding for accommodations for students with disabilities.

Reasonable Accommodations: Students with disabilities go through the same selection process as other FLEX students. However, they may not have been brought up in an inclusive community or they may not have attended a mainstream school before. After the Preparatory Workshop, FLEX students with disabilities will arrive in their permanent host communities. Your proposal should include a plan for helping your student/s with disabilities become acclimated to their community and finding appropriate resources and accommodations as needed and as required by law.

7. Trainings/Orientations

Proposals should include sample outlines with relevant topics to be covered in all trainings and orientations.

FLEX-specific Staff/Volunteer Training and Orientation: POs are responsible for conducting FLEX-specific training for all their employees, including all local coordinators, volunteers, and third parties acting on their behalf who are involved in the Placement Component. This training should be designed to provide the methods and tools necessary for monitoring and counseling FLEX students, their host families, and school personnel with sensitivity to cross-cultural issues unique to this exchange population. The training must ensure understanding of the goals, expectations, and requirements of the FLEX Program as explained in this POGI, as well as all J-1 Visa requirements.

Host Family Orientation: Prior to the student's arrival, the PO must conduct an in-person FLEX-specific orientation for all screened and selected host families and provide them with the information and reference materials necessary to host and support a FLEX student. (Note: Previous interviews during the screening and selecting process do not constitute this FLEX-specific orientation.) The FLEX Program Office recommends that orientations for families hosting FLEX students not include other non-FLEX host families to ensure that adequate attention is given to FLEX program-related and cross-cultural issues.

Arrival Orientation for Participants: POs' practices and procedures for the FLEX student orientation must meet the general J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program regulations and the secondary school student category-specific orientation requirements. Orientations should take place within one month of the students' arrival, and they should address the PO's policies, procedures, and rules, as well as the PO's procedures for communicating with students and for monitoring and supporting their exchange with sensitivity to cultural issues unique to this exchange population. The orientations must ensure understanding of the goals, expectations, and requirements of the FLEX Program as explained in this POGI.

Mid-Year Orientation: POs must arrange a mid-year orientation to meet with all FLEX Program participants approximately halfway through their exchange programs, preferably in January. The purpose of this meeting is to assess their progress in achieving Program and personal goals and to provide the necessary assistance to enable them to meet these goals.

Re-entry Training: POs are responsible for preparing students for bringing closure to their American exchange experiences as well as re-entry to their home countries. POs must ensure that students receive relevant information concerning FLEX Program alumni opportunities in their respective countries and

discuss individual plans for possible alumni projects. Note: Alumni activities are coordinated in the students' countries through the Organizational Components.

8. Participant Monitoring

POs' practices and procedures for monitoring FLEX participants must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25.

Monitoring Guidance: The Office of Citizen Exchanges provides the following further guidance that Placement Organizations must follow:

- **Student Progress:** Local coordinators will monitor students' progress in academics, social adjustment, and activities such as community service, exemplary achievements, and other program-related endeavors and track their progress in monthly contact reports.
- **Reporting Systems:** POs will use reporting systems to distribute and collect monthly updates, reports, and other communications that students will fill out and submit themselves. Your proposal should provide details on this system. Plans that describe ways to attain 100% student participation will be deemed more competitive under the "Participant Monitoring" review criterion. The purpose of these student monthly updates is to allow FLEX students to self-report issues and to allow the POs to track these issues effectively. POs must promptly notify ECA and the Organizational Components grantee about problems, inconsistencies, or concerns that are identified from these updates.
- **Student Support:** Local coordinators will identify when students may need additional support from their natural parents, peers, or other PO staff; arrange counseling for participants if needed; document the circumstances; and notify the PO who will, when necessary, notify the Organizational Components grantee to gain natural parent perspective or concurrence. POs also will notify ECA when necessary.
- **Early Returns:** If a situation leads to an early return request, the PO should provide ECA with consistent and thorough documentation that ensures that the involved students, host families, and natural families are aware of the situation and have been included in its resolution. POs will prepare a clear and concise On-Program Support (OPS) Report of the circumstances detailing communication between parties. The report will be shared with the Organizational Components grantee and ECA. Only the Office of Citizen Exchanges can make the decision to terminate and repatriate a student; under no circumstances will POs or anyone acting on their behalf inform FLEX participants or imply to them that their programs will terminate or that they will be repatriated without specific direction from the Office of Citizen Exchanges.

Site visits:

- Full-time permanent employee(s) or an official designate of the PO's headquarters must conduct site visits to 20% of your FLEX students in their host communities. The purpose of these visits is to see the FLEX students in their host family/community environments. The visits should cover a combination of clustered and non-clustered students. These site visits should be conducted in close coordination with the Bureau to complement Program Office site visits and ensure maximum coverage.
- POs should submit site visit plans to ECA through the on-program support email address provided to award recipients. Site visit plans for October-December should be submitted by

September 30, 2016. Site visit plans for January-June should be submitted by December 15, 2016.

Communication Guidance:

- POs, whether they are designated as sponsors by the Department of State or not, will report to the ECA FLEX Program Office any matters that are required to be reported by a sponsor pursuant to the above regulations. The Program Office, as the FLEX sponsor, will be responsible for reporting to the Private Sector Programs Division of the Office of Designation.
- POs must provide the Office of Citizen Exchanges with reports of all situations that affect the health, safety, or well-being of FLEX participants.
- POs are required to enter complete, accurate, and up-to-date placement information into the FLEX web-based database, including host family and Local Coordinator changes that may occur during the year, within 48 hours of the time that the change took place.
- In a timely fashion, POs must distribute to all FLEX students information that the Office of Citizen Exchanges provides regarding Department-initiated FLEX Program activities. Such activities include: International Education Week, Civic Education Workshop, Global Youth Service Day, and ad-hoc program-related activities that may arise during the year (e.g., online chats, meetings, briefings).
- In a timely manner, POs must inform the Office of Citizen Exchanges of any publicity that highlights students or the FLEX Program in a positive light or otherwise strengthens outreach efforts, particularly those that involve government officials and the media. When the media interact with FLEX students, POs should identify the FLEX Program as a U.S. Department of State-sponsored program.

9. Enhancements

Cultural Enhancement Activities: POs are required to conduct cultural enhancement activities during the academic year to increase the participants' understanding of American culture, values, and history. These activities should expose students to and increase their understanding of key elements of American civil society and foster dialogue and enduring ties between the students and their host communities.

Examples of cultural enhancement activities include briefings on local/state government and the judicial system; programs on community issues and concerns (e.g., environmental protection, efficient energy use, substance abuse prevention, HIV awareness); and activities that expose participants to and increase their understanding of the diversity that exists in American society.

Funding for enhancement activities should be disbursed in small increments throughout the year to encourage a variety of activities. Applicants should include \$400 per student in your budget to cover the cost of these activities. Enhancement funds may not be spent on packaged commercial sightseeing trips. All enhancement activities should include debrief sessions so participants can discuss what they have experienced.

Leadership Development Programs: POs are encouraged to earmark a portion of the \$400 per student enhancement activities fund for specialized training for the development of leadership skills such as public speaking, team-building, critical thinking, and goal-setting so that the students are prepared to apply these skills once they return to their home countries. Proposed training should explore issues that

foster civic responsibility, tolerance, public service, and conflict resolution and management. POs are encouraged to interact with established local youth-oriented groups and to use free or low-cost resources, and/or to provide scholarships through cost-share to enable FLEX students to participate in local and national leadership trainings. This will be assessed under the “Program Planning” section of the review criterion.

10. Community Service

All FLEX students are required to participate in community service activities. POs are expected to provide participants and their host families with clear and precise guidelines that reflect the standards, requirements, and expectations of their organizations, including but not limited to the following:

- Minimum number of hours and type (e.g., volunteer work or other tasks) of required community service; and
- Method by which Placement Organizations will monitor community service.

11. Insurance

The Bureau offers the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) plan for students participating in the program. Detailed information on ASPE can be found in 10 FAM 240: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/88250.pdf>. There is no cost to the PO if the PO opts to use the ASPE plan. Placement Organizations wishing to use a different plan must demonstrate that such alternate plan provides comparable or more comprehensive coverage. Coverage must begin when students depart their home countries and not conclude until they return home. Please keep in mind that the students with disabilities who participate in the Disability Components Preparatory Workshop must be covered by the Placement Organization’s health insurance policy while they are participating in the workshop. If you choose not to use ASPE, your proposal must include a copy of your chosen insurance policy and must include the cost of the insurance in the budget. The insurance you propose to use must meet the requirements of 22 CFR 62.14.

12. Performance Reports

The FLEX Program Office will supply quarterly report guidelines. POs must submit all quarterly performance reports in accordance with the instructions in the NOFO no more than 30 days after the reporting period end dates: September 30th, December 30th, March 30th, and June 30th. An SF-PPR “Performance Progress Report” Cover Sheet must be submitted with all performance reports. Please also follow the instructions provided in the NOFO for the submission of the final performance report.

13. Evaluation

The Bureau expects POs to track host families and other key participants and to develop an evaluation plan to measure gains in mutual understanding and the exchange of information. Proposals must include a plan for evaluating program outputs and outcomes as defined by the applicant. ECA may request assistance in administering additional evaluation tools to participants that are separate from your organization’s internal evaluation of the program. Award recipients must maintain all data collected, including survey responses and contact information, for a minimum of three years following completion of each participant’s exchange visitor program.

14. Department of State Web Resources

Outreach Resources: During the cooperative agreement period, the Bureau may develop hosting resources to assist POs with hosting outreach, and to promote FLEX as a U.S. Department of State

program. POs are expected to support promotional campaigns by providing information to ECA and updating promotional materials as needed.

Online Communities: All PO staff and volunteers associated with FLEX are expected to be knowledgeable of the Department of State's resources such as, but not limited to, www.exchanges.state.gov and www.alumni.state.gov, and to register as members or guest members of the websites, as applicable. Staff and coordinator training as well as orientations for students and host families are to include presentations and demonstrations on these resources.

Department of State resource sites must be promoted effectively to participants and participants are expected to become active members at these sites. While POs may provide their own resources and on-line opportunities, these additional online resources may not replace involvement with Department of State online communities.

III. 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 and 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 - Nonconstruction 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. Nature of activities
4. Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources, and total cost per student
5. Scope and Goals
 - a. Number of students to be placed
 - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
 - c. Geographic distribution of students
 - d. Method of placement
 - e. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

Narrative

In no more than 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
3. Program Activities (advertisement, recruitment, orientation, academic component, cultural program, participant monitoring)
4. Program Evaluation
5. Follow-on
6. Project Management
7. Work Plan/Time Frame

Additional Information to be Submitted

Each budget must include the following costs:

- \$125 fixed rate per student monthly allowance for 11 months for social activities and personal items (e.g., movie and pizza with friends, toiletries, haircut). Pro-rated amounts for partial first and last months are allowed.
- \$300 average per student incidentals allowance fund to be spent by the host family for school start-up costs and other school-related expenses (e.g., yearbook, locker fees, gym shorts) for which receipts must be presented to the Placement Organization
- \$100 average per student emergency expense fund to be retained by the Placement Organization for small emergency expenses (e.g., eyeglasses, minor dental problems)
- \$400 average per student enhancement activities fund. (All related activities including field visits, leadership training, cross-culture and inter-faith workshops, community service projects, etc. must be included in this amount. Additional funding requests will not be accepted.)
- Support and monitoring of regional and local staff; include support for home visits to a minimum of 20% of students
- Staff travel, i.e., expenses for at least one person per organization, including sub-grantees, to Washington, DC to attend a two-day ECA Youth Programs Division annual meeting

Budgets also typically include but are not necessarily limited to the following items:

- National and regional coordinator trainings;
- Orientations (post-arrival, mid-program, and re-entry) for students and host families;

- Stipends and honoraria for non-salaried staff and volunteers;
 - Identifying, screening (e.g., criminal background checks and interviewing), selecting and orienting host families;
 - Monitoring students and host families, trouble-shooting, counseling, and resettling students, as necessary;
 - Program materials (including an explanation of how materials will be used);
 - Administrative costs (e.g., salaries, communication, and supplies);
 - Promotional materials, including website development or maintenance;
 - Mandatory school fees, including registration and books; and
 - Insurance costs, if not using ASPE.
- Calendar of activities/itinerary
 - Letters of endorsement
 - Resumes and CVs (resumes of all new staff should be included in the submission; no resume should exceed two pages.)
 - 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.

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.

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.

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/Ability to Achieve Program Objectives:** The Program Narrative should exhibit originality, substance, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Reviewers will assess the degree to which proposals engage participants in community activities that involve skills development and leadership training. Proposals should incorporate strategies that creatively utilize local resources to ensure an efficient use of program funds. Strong preference will be given to organizations that choose to place participants in clusters of at least three students (these students should be from different countries, when possible) in a particular Local Coordinator's area of responsibility. A detailed agenda and work plan should adhere to all guidelines described in the solicitation package. Reviewers will also assess the degree to which the proposed outcomes of the project are realistic and measurable.
- 2. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. It is a goal of the Department to ensure that all funded programs reflect the diversity of American society. Describe your plans to promote this goal in the selection of host families and in the local enhancement programming. Achievable and relevant features should be cited in both program administration (e.g., selection of participants' host families and schools, program venue, and program evaluation) and program content (e.g., orientations, program meetings, enhancement programming, resource materials, and follow-up activities).
- 3. Placement Organization's Record/Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the Program's goals and outcomes. Reviewers will assess the applicant and its partners, if any, to determine if they offer adequate resources, expertise, and experience to fulfill program objectives. Partner activities should be clearly defined. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with reporting and J-1 Visa regulatory requirements. Past performance of recipients will be considered. For new applicants, proposals should demonstrate capacity to participate in the Program. In addition, organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors must include a discussion of their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements. Proposals that fail to include the above information in their narrative will be

deemed less or not competitive under this review criterion. In addition, ECA will review the record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq. of applicant organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors by ECA's Office of Private Sector Exchange. The applicant organization's record of compliance will be used as one factor in evaluating the record/ability of organizations to carry out successful exchange programs.

- 4. Participant Monitoring:** Proposals must include a detailed monitoring plan which addresses Student, Local Coordinator (LC), and Host Family (HF) monitoring. Given the importance the Department places on this criterion, you should dedicate a significant percentage of the narrative to explaining how you will achieve the Department's goals in regard to monitoring the health, safety, and welfare of program participants. You may use the appendices to house additional details and supporting documentation.
- 5. Program Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the program component's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. Evaluation should include outputs and outcomes, as described above, and describe how program success will be determined through stated criteria. Reviewers will assess your plans to monitor student progress and program activities, particularly in regard to intended outcomes indicated in your proposal. Award recipients will be expected to submit quarterly reports, which should be included as an integral component of the work plan.
- 6. Cost-effectiveness:** Reviewers will analyze proposed budgets for clarity and cost-effectiveness. They will also assess the rationale of the proposed budget and whether the allocation of funds is appropriate to complete tasks outlined in the Program Narrative. The overhead and administrative components of the program, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions. Preference will be given to organizations whose proposals demonstrate a quality, cost-effective program.

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

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The NOFO indicates the date the complete proposal is due and the manner in which proposals must be submitted. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this deadline. For further information regarding this program or the competition, call Amy Schulz at (202) 632-6052, Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C/PY, SA-5, Floor 3, Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037; Fax: 202-632-9355; email: schulzaj@state.gov.