Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity
(NOFO): FY 2016 Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders
Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAAE-16-010

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.009
Key Dates/Application Deadline: December 11, 2015
Executive Summary: The Study of the U.S. Branch, Office of Academic Exchange Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), invites proposal submissions for the design and implementation of eight (8) Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders under five different themes, pending the availability of FY 2016 funds. Applicants may submit a proposal to implement one or more Institutes, depending on the option chosen, see details in Section A.3 Program Administration.

Taking place over the course of five weeks at a U.S. academic institution, each Institute should be organized for a group of up to 20 foreign undergraduate students focusing on one of the following themes: Civic Engagement; Global Environmental Issues; Religious Pluralism in the United States; Social Entrepreneurship; and Women's Leadership. Information on the scheduling of the Institutes and grouping of participants can be found in Section A.2. Institute Themes. Each Institute should include four weeks of academic residency followed by a one-week integrated study tour that will expose participants to a unique region of the United States. The one-week study tour should conclude with a two or three day session in Washington, D.C.

ECA plans to issue up to eight cooperative agreements for the implementation of the eight Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders and welcomes applications from accredited post-secondary education institutions in the United States and public and private non-profit organizations or consortia of organizations (see Eligibility Information, section C).

Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process. The awarding of Cooperative Agreements for these programs is contingent upon the availability of FY 2016 funds. The awarding of the non-competitive continuations in FY 2017 and FY 2018 is contingent on the availability of funding and successful performance.

It is ECA's intent to award up to eight Cooperative Agreements (one base year plus two non-competitive continuations) for an estimated combined total of $5,760,000 for all eight institutes over three years, pending the availability of funds and successful performance. Please see section B. 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.

A.1. Purpose: The Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders are intensive academic programs whose purpose is to provide groups of foreign undergraduate students with a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture, and institutions. Institutes include community service activities, leadership development, and opportunities to interact with U.S. peers. The Institutes should address the influence of principles and values such as democracy, the rule of law, individual rights, freedom of expression, equality, diversity, and tolerance, and should also incorporate a focus on contemporary American life.

Each Institute should be five weeks; participants should spend approximately four weeks at an academic institution and approximately one week on an integrated educational study tour, including two to three days in Washington, D.C. typically at the conclusion of the Institute. Local site visits and educational travel should directly complement the academic program and provide opportunities to observe varied aspects of American life and to discuss lessons learned in the academic program.

The academic program should include group discussions, experiential learning activities, and exercises that focus on the theme. It should also include a leadership development component with sessions on topics such as teambuilding, collective problem-solving skills, effective communication, and management skills. Institutes should incorporate community service activities in which the students experience firsthand how not-for-profit organizations and volunteerism play a key role in American civil society.

All Institutes should foster ECA's mission to promote mutual understanding between citizens of the United States and other countries. Thus, the programs should include robust opportunities for participants to meet Americans from a variety of backgrounds, to interact with their U.S. peers, and to speak to appropriate student and civic groups about their experiences and life in their home countries. **Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document for more information.**

A.2. Institute Themes
a.) The Study of the U.S. Institute on Civic Engagement will provide participants with an overview of how citizens have shaped U.S. history, government, and society both as individuals and groups. The academic program will define civic engagement, examine its development in the United States, and explore topics such as citizenship, community

building, economic development, grassroots activism, political leadership, and volunteerism. In order to define the content of the Institute and enhance the academic experience, proposals may choose to focus on a specific theme or sub-themes such as civil rights, entrepreneurship, ethics, leadership, or media. To the extent possible, academic sessions will be complemented with hands-on sessions or workshops designed to build skills in the topics mentioned above. The Institute will encourage participants to elaborate innovative and practical plans to become engaged citizens in their own communities. Pending the availability of FY 2016 funds, two Institutes on Civic Engagement are planned.

ECA anticipates that participants will be drawn from the following regions and countries:

1) Middle East (possible countries include: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia) – Expected dates of the Institute: June and July, 2016
2) Southern Africa (possible countries include: Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe) – Expected dates of the Institute: January and February, 2017

b.) The Study of the U.S. Institute on Global Environmental Issues will expose participants to current themes in studies of the environment, including climate change, natural resource management, sustainable development / sustainable agricultural practices, food security, ecotourism, energy generation (new and traditional forms), and water management and treatment. The issues will be explored from numerous angles: local grassroots activism and civic initiatives, market-oriented approaches, and federal government policies and regulation. The Institute will explore environmental issues in the context of a globalized society, and draw comparisons between the United States and the participants' home countries. The Institute will also provide opportunities for participants to engage with policy makers, individuals in technical positions, community representatives, indigenous leaders, and other key actors committed to the protection and management of the environment.   Pending the availability of FY 2016 funds, one Institute on Global Environmental Issues is planned.

ECA anticipates that participants will be drawn globally (possible countries include: Brazil, China, India, Russia) – Expected dates of the Institute: June and July, 2016

c.) The Study of the U.S. Institute on Religious Pluralism in the United States will explore U.S. history, society, and institutions within the context of religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue. Topics will include, but are not limited to, early religious traditions in the United States; the separation of church and state; immigration and the introduction of new religions in the United States; protection and representation of minority groups and religions; and interfaith dialogue and cooperation in a diverse and rapidly changing world. Participants will meet with U.S. community leaders of different faiths that advocate for collaboration and tolerance among religious groups. Participants will also examine the leadership role that religious officials play in their own societies and develop ideas for how they can work with leaders, of similar or different faiths, to bring about positive social change. Pending the availability of FY 2016 funds, one Institute on Religious Pluralism in the United States is planned.

ECA anticipates that participants will be drawn from the following regions and countries: Europe and the Middle East (possible countries include: Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey) – Expected dates of the Institute: June and July, 2016

d.) The Study of the U.S. Institute on Social Entrepreneurship will provide participants with an overview of how entrepreneurial skills can address social issues. The Institute will review the development, history, challenges, and successes of social enterprises and community leaders, in the United States and globally. The Institute will give participants a foundation in how to employ entrepreneurial skills to address social issues and will provide unique opportunities to meet with American local community leaders. The Institute will address topics such as: organizational development and management, business ethics, negotiations, emerging markets and risk analysis, microfinance, corporate social responsibility, strategic business planning and innovation, and women and minorities in entrepreneurship. Pending the availability of FY 2016 funds, two Institutes on Social Entrepreneurship are planned.
ECA anticipates that participants will be drawn from the following regions and countries:
1) Africa and the Middle East (possible countries include: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia) – Expected dates of the Institute: June and July, 2016
2) Africa (possible countries include: Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal) – Expected dates of the Institute: June and July, 2016

e.) The Study of the U.S. Institute on Women's Leadership will examine the history and participation of women in public life in the United States. The Institute will focus on two major areas: (1) Developing participants' leadership skills in areas such as critical thinking, communication, decision-making, and managerial abilities; and (2) Placing these abilities in the context of the history and participation of women in U.S. politics, economics, culture, and society. The Institute will examine the historical domestic progress towards women's equality in the United States, the current domestic successes and challenges to women in a variety of fields, and current challenges in global women's issues. The Institute will begin with an opening workshop and program activities in Washington, D.C., with participants from the other Study of the U.S. Institutes on Women's Leadership. The workshop is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, June 29, 2016. Pending the availability of FY 2016 funds, two Institutes on Women's Leadership are planned.
ECA anticipates that participants will be drawn from the following regions and countries:
1) Central Asia and Europe (possible countries include: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan) – Expected dates of the Institute: June 25 – July 30, 2016
2) Global (possible countries include India, Morocco, Mongolia, Pakistan) – Expected dates of the Institute: June 25 – July 30, 2016

A.3. Program Administration:
ECA is seeking detailed proposals from accredited post-secondary U.S. higher education institutions (community colleges, liberal arts colleges, public and private universities), consortia of organizations, and/or from public and private non-profit organizations meeting the eligibility requirements outlined under Section C below. Consortia

applicants must designate a lead institution as the primary award recipient of the Cooperative Agreement. Organizations that opt to work in sub-award arrangements should clearly outline all duties and responsibilities of the partner organization(s), ideally in the form of sub-award agreements that include detailed line-item budgets.

Applicants may choose to apply under option A or option B. Option A allows for applicant organizations (accredited post-secondary education institutions and public and private non-profit organizations or consortia of organizations) to apply to **host** one or two Institutes. Option B allows for applicant organizations (accredited post-secondary education institutions and public and private non-profit organizations or consortia of organizations) to apply to **host and/or administer** four Institutes.

Option A: Under Option A, applicant organizations are invited to submit one application to **host** one or two Institutes under any of the themes listed in Section A.2. It is anticipated that up to one to eight awards may be made under Option A.

Option B: Under Option B, applicant organizations are invited to submit one application to **administer** four (4) Institutes under the themes listed in Section A.2. Institute Themes. The recipient may conduct up to two of the four Institutes and provide and monitor sub-awards to selected host institutions to conduct the remaining two Institutes. Each host institution selected should not implement more than two Institutes. It is anticipated that one award may be made under Option B.

All proposals should clearly indicate the desired theme, country group, and time line from Section A.2. Institute Themes above, and should demonstrate thematic expertise, as well as any regional expertise, if applicable. ECA reserves the right to amend or modify the list of participating countries and regions should conditions change in the nominating country or if other countries are identified as U.S. foreign policy priorities. Participating countries and regions will be determined by ECA, in coordination with the Public Affairs Sections at U.S. embassies abroad.

ECA also reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets based on program needs and the availability of U.S. government funding.

A.4. Participants:
Participants in the Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders will be highly motivated undergraduate students from around the world with strong English language skills.

Award recipients will not participate in the selection of candidates. Participants will be identified and nominated by the U.S. embassies and consulates and/or Fulbright commissions with final selection made by ECA. Each Institute will host up to 20 participants, for a total of approximately 160 students.

Participants will be drawn from among the priority country groupings listed after each of the thematic institutes described above. Applicants are welcome to indicate their preference for one of the country groups listed by theme and if so, should indicate any regional expertise. ECA reserves the right to amend or modify the list of participating countries and regions should conditions change in the nominating country or if other countries are identified as U.S. foreign policy priorities. Participating countries and regions will be determined by ECA, in coordination with the Public Affairs Sections at U.S. embassies abroad.

Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document for more information on participants.

A.5. Program Dates:
The anticipated award dates for the up to eight Cooperative Agreements will be on or about April 1, 2016. The Institutes should be 36 days in length; this should include participant arrival and departure days. The Institutes will be scheduled in the summer or winter, as indicated above.

A. 6. Program Guidelines: The recipient is responsible for the conception and structure of the Institute and its agenda. Proposals must provide a detailed and comprehensive narrative describing the objectives of the Institute; the title, scope, and content of each session; planned site visits, and how each session relates to the overall Institute theme. Proposals must include a syllabus that indicates the subject matter for each lecture, panel discussion, group presentation, or other activity. The syllabus also should confirm or provisionally identify proposed speakers, trainers, and session leaders, and clearly show how assigned readings will advance the goals of each session.

Please see section D. Application and Submission Information for application submission requirements. Proposals will be reviewed on the basis of their responsiveness to the six review criteria listed in this NOFO. The accompanying POGI provides program-specific guidelines that all proposals must address fully.

Please note: In a Cooperative Agreement, the Study of the U.S. Branch is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. The Branch may request that the recipient make modifications to the academic residency and/or educational travel components of the program. The recipient will be required to obtain approval of significant program changes in advance of their implementation. These activities and the roles and responsibilities of the Department and the recipient organization are outlined in the attached POGI.

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 continuation years 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 continuation years.

B.   Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: *Cooperative Agreement.* ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description above.
Fiscal Year Funds: Per Institute: FY 2016 base year, $240,000; FY 2017 – non-competitive continuation year-one, $240,000; FY 2018 – non-competitive continuation year-two, $240,000, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.
Approximate Total Funding: $5,760,000 - This figure represents the funding for up to eight Institutes for the base year plus two non-competitive continuation years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. Each Institute is funded at up to $240,000 per year, pending the availability of funds.
Approximate Number of Awards: up to 8
Floor of Award Range: None.
Ceiling of Award Range: $240,000 for one Institute, $480,000 for two Institutes; or $960,000 for four Institutes (for the base year only)
Approximate Average Award: $240,000 for one Institute, $480,000 for two Institutes; or $960,000 for four Institutes (for the base year only)
Anticipated Award Date: April 1, 2016, pending the availability of funds
Anticipated Project Completion Date: September 30, 2019. This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award – one base year plus two non-competitive continuation years.
Additional Information: Cooperative Agreements will be awarded for a period of 12 months (base year) with non-competitive continuations for a second and third period of 12 and 18 months, respectively, to ensure adequate time for post-Institute follow-on activities. ECA will notify the recipient of its 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.

Funding:
Option A: Implementation of one or two Institutes – total available funding up to $240,000 (one Institute) or up to $480,000 (two Institutes) for base year.
Option B: Implementation of four Institutes – total available funding up to $960,000 for base year.

C.   Eligibility Information:

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

C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, ECA 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.) Experience in Conducting International Exchanges: ECA grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to $130,000 in ECA funding. ECA anticipates making multiple awards in the amount of $240,000 per Institute per year 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. It is ECA's intent to fund a total of up to eight (8) thematic Institutes, at least one under each theme, as a result of this solicitation.

Applicant organizations may submit no more than one application under this competition for Option A or Option B. as outlined above. See Section C.1 above, for a definition of an applicant organization.

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.

Applicants should indicate whether they are applying under Option A or Option B, as detailed above. If an option is not selected or if both options are selected, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

D. Application and Submission Information:

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, ECA 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**:

In the event an applicant cannot obtain an electronic application package from Grants.gov, please contact José Marrero, Program Officer, The Study of the U.S. Branch, ECA/A/E/USS, SA-5, Fourth Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037, MarreroJA@state.gov, (202) 632-3337 to request a Solicitation Package. Please refer to the title of this NOFO when making your request.

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

It also contains the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document, which provides specific information, award criteria and budget instructions tailored to this competition. ECA/A/E/USS also provides a sample budget in Microsoft Excel format. You may request that template in editable format by contacting Program Officer José Marrero at MarreroJA@state.gov.

Please specify José Marrero 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 ECA'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.   UEI Number: 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.   Required Proposal Elements: All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget. Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document and the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) for additional formatting and technical requirements.

D.3c. Required Registrations: 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.   **Non-Profit Status**: 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.   **FFATA Report**: 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.   Verifying Non-Profit Status: 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.   GrantSolutions: **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 Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of 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.

ECA will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

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

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

Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines: Pursuant to ECA'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," ECA "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. ECA 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. ECA 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 ECA 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 ECA 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 must 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 ECA 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.

3.) Prior Grants Officer approval is required to carry forward an unobligated balance from a prior funding period to the subsequent funding period. If the Grants Officer determines that some or all of the unobligated funds are not necessary to perform the program activity, the Grants Officer may decline the Recipient's request to carry forward the unobligated balance.

The Grants Officer may, at their discretion, use the unobligated balance to reduce or offset future funding for a subsequent funding period. An unobligated balance at the end of a funding period is not sufficient justification to carry forward funds. A final determination and approval to carry forward any funds will be communicated via a cost amendment with adjustment, if any, to new obligation amounts.

   i. The request to carry forward an unobligated balance must include:

      a. A brief narrative why funds remain unobligated and how the unobligated funds will be used to complete the previously approved goals and objectives of the program; and,

      b. A detailed budget that reflects the amount of unobligated funds to date, and anticipated expenditures in the subsequent period of performance for all cost categories under the authorized budget.

D.3o. **Allowable Costs**: Please refer to section F.2. of this document for information on allowable costs. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

D.3p. **Application Deadline and Method of Submission**:
Application Deadline Date: **Friday, December 11, 2015**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grants.gov Customer Support
Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays
Email: support@grants.gov

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

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

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

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

E.   Application Review Information

ECA 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 ECA regulations and guidelines and forwarded to ECA 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 ECA's Grants Officer.

E.1.   Review Criteria: Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

1. **Quality of Program Plan and Ability to Achieve Program Objectives**: Proposals should exhibit originality and clearly demonstrate how the Institute will meet the objectives laid out in this solicitation. A detailed itinerary and staff work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Activities should be reasonable, feasible, and form a coherent program for participant exploration of the topic. Competitive proposals will clearly promote ECA's mission: to foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries to promote friendly and peaceful relations.

2. **Support of Diversity**: Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of ECA's diversity policy. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program design and implementation, and how diversity will enhance

the program's goals and objectives. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan, and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.

3. **Project Evaluation**: As explained in section D.3J., proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives are recommended.

4. **Cost-effectiveness/Cost-sharing**: The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support, as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

5. **Institutional Track Record/Ability**: Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs (past exchange programs need not have been ECA funded). ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past ECA awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by ECA Grants Staff. ECA will consider the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be fully qualified to achieve the project's goals.

6. **Follow-on Activities**: Proposals should discuss provisions made for follow-up with returned participants as a means of establishing longer-term individual and institutional linkages. Proposals also should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without ECA support) ensuring that ECA supported programs are not isolated events. Please refer to the POGI for additional information on follow-on activities.

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 ECA procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from ECA's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition.

F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:
Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following:

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

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

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

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

F.3. Reporting Requirements:

You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:
  Mandatory:
  1. Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. 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 the Department has approved a financial report, the Recipient must upload the approved report to 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 (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 ECA in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D. Application and Submission Information 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 ECA upon request.

G.   Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: José Marrero, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Academic Exchange Programs, ECA/A/E/USS, SA-5, 4th Floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, tel: 202-632-3337 and fax: 202-632-6490, MarreroJA@state.gov.

All correspondence with ECA 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, ECA 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 ECA representative. Explanatory information provided by ECA that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. ECA 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   October 28, 2015
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State