

**Department of State**

**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity**

**(NOFO):** FY 2017 Study of the U.S. Institutes for Scholars

**Announcement Type:** New Cooperative Agreement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** ECA-ECAAE-17-008

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 19.401

**Key Dates/Application Deadline:** January 6, 2017

**Executive Summary:** The Study of the U.S. Branch (ECA/A/E/USS), Office of Academic Exchange Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), invites proposal submissions from accredited U.S. post-secondary education institutions and U.S. public and private non-profit organizations or consortia of organizations (see Eligibility Information, section C) for the design and implementation of three (3) different Study of the U.S. Institutes for Scholars, each to take place over the course of six weeks beginning in June 2017, pending the availability of FY2017 funds. See details in section A.3 Program Administration.

These Institutes should provide multinational groups of experienced foreign university educators, scholars, teachers, and other professionals with a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions. The Institutes will be for groups of 18 foreign university level faculty, focusing on the themes of American Politics and Political Thought, Contemporary American Literature, and Religious Pluralism in the United States, with a total duration of six weeks each. More information on the Institute themes can be found in section A.2. Institute Themes.

Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant for the different Institute themes, 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 2017 funds. The awarding of the non-competitive continuations in FY 2018 and FY 2019 is contingent on the availability of funding and successful performance.

It is ECA's intent to award three (3) Cooperative Agreements (one base year plus two non-competitive continuations, formerly called option years) for an estimated total amount of \$2,610,000, pending availability of funds and successful performance. Please see section B. Federal Award Information below for additional details. If additional funds become available, ECA reserves the right to fund additional Institutes.

**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:**

Study of the U.S. Institutes for Scholars are intensive academic programs whose purpose is to provide foreign university faculty and other scholars the opportunity to deepen their understanding of U.S. society, culture, and institutions. The ultimate goal is to strengthen curricula and to improve the quality of teaching about the United States in academic institutions abroad.

The Institutes should be six weeks in length; participants should spend a minimum of four weeks at the host institution and up to two weeks on an educational study tour, including at least three days in Washington, D.C., at the conclusion of the Institute. The educational travel component for all programs should directly complement the academic program and should include visits to cities and other sites of interest in the region around the recipient institution as well as to another geographic region of the country.

Each program should be designed as an intensive, academically rigorous seminar for an experienced group of educators from abroad. Institutes should be organized through an integrated series of lectures, readings, seminar discussions, regional travel, and site visits, and should also include sessions that expose participants to U.S. pedagogical philosophy and practice for teaching the discipline. Each Institute should also include opportunities for limited but well-directed independent research. In addition, 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 and to interact with their U.S. peers. **Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document for more information.**

### **A.2. Institute Themes**

- 1. The Study of the U.S. Institute on American Politics and Political Thought** should provide a multinational group of 18 experienced foreign university faculty and practitioners insight into how intellectual and political movements have influenced modern American political institutions and a deeper understanding of major currents in U.S. political thought from the colonial period to the present. It should explore the shaping of American identity and the intersection and interplay between that identity and U.S. history and politics. It should cover a broad range of American experiences that have shaped and been shaped by our national identity including, but not limited to, the colonial period, the constitutional

founding, the Civil War, industrialization, the Great Depression, the Cold War, and the Civil Rights movement. The Institute should also use this lens to explore contemporary U.S. political and social debates and public policy, relating them back to the formation and development of U.S. political thought and American identity. One award of up to \$290,000 will support this Institute.

2. **The Study of the U.S. Institute on Contemporary American Literature** should provide a multinational group of up to 18 experienced foreign university faculty and practitioners with a deeper understanding of U.S. society and culture, past and present, through an examination of contemporary American (U.S.) literature. Its purpose is twofold: 1) to explore contemporary American writers and writing in a variety of genres; and 2) to suggest how the themes explored in those works reflect larger currents within contemporary U.S. society and culture. The program should explore the diversity of the American literary landscape, examining how major contemporary writers, schools and movements reflect the traditions of the U.S. literary canon. At the same time, the Institute should expose participants to writers who represent a departure from that tradition, and who are establishing new directions for American literature. One award of up to \$290,000 will support this Institute.
  
3. **The Study of the U.S. Institute on Religious Pluralism in the United States** should provide a multinational group of up to 18 experienced foreign university faculty and practitioners with a deeper understanding of U.S. society and culture, past and present, through an examination of religious pluralism in the United States and its intersection with American democracy. Employing a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing on fields such as history, political science, sociology, anthropology, law and others where appropriate, the program should explore both the historical and contemporary relationship between church and state in the United States; examine the ways in which religious thought and practice have modified and have been influenced by the development of American-style democracy; examine the intersections of religion and politics in the United States in such areas as elections, public policy, and foreign policy; and explore the sociology and demography of religion in the United States today, including a survey of the diversity of contemporary religious beliefs (major and minor) and its impact on American politics and society. One award of up to \$290,000 will support this Institute.

**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), and other not-for-profit academic organizations with established reputations in a field or discipline related to the specific program theme and meeting the eligibility requirements outlined under section C. below.

Applicants may apply to host **one** Institute under one of the themes listed in section A.2. Multiple proposals for the different Institute themes are not permitted.

All proposals should clearly indicate the desired theme from section A.2. Institute Themes above, and should demonstrate thematic expertise, as well as any regional expertise, if applicable. Participating countries and regions will be determined by ECA, in coordination with the Public Affairs Sections at U.S. embassies abroad.

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

**A.4. Participants:** Participants will be diverse in age, professional position, and travel experience abroad. Participants may or may not have in-depth knowledge of the particular Institute program theme, but all will likely have had exposure to the relevant discipline and some experience teaching about the United States. Participants will represent all regions of the world and will be fluent or have advanced proficiency in English. Please see the POGI for more information on participants.

**A.5. Program Dates:** The anticipated award dates for the three cooperative agreements will be on or about April 1, 2017. The Institutes should be approximately 44 days in length. This should include participant arrival and departure days; Institutes should take place in summer 2017.

**A.6. Program Guidelines:** The award 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 (ECA/A/E/USS) is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. The Branch may request that the award recipient make modifications to the academic residency and/or educational travel components of the program. The award 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 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 section A. Program Description above.

**Fiscal Year Funds:** FY 2017 base year, \$290,000; FY 2018 – non-competitive continuation year-one, \$290,000; FY 2019 – non-competitive continuation year-two, \$290,000, all pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

**Approximate Total Funding:** \$2,610,000 - This figure represents the funding for three Institutes for the base year plus two non-competitive continuation years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

**Approximate Number of Awards:** 3

**Floor of Award Range:** None.

**Ceiling of Award Range:** \$290,000 for one Institute (for the base year only)

**Approximate Average Award:** \$290,000 for one Institute (for the base year only)

**Anticipated Award Date:** April 1, 2017, pending the availability of funds

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** September 30, 2020. 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 (formerly referred to as option years) 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 our intention to exercise or not to exercise a non-competitive continuation at least 90 days in advance of expiration of the current year after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to exercise a non-competitive continuation will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

## **C. Eligibility Information:**

**C.1. Eligible applicants:** Applications may be submitted by 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:**

**1. 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 three awards in the amount of up to \$290,000 per year to support program and administrative costs required to implement these exchange programs. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

**2. 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 award three (3) separate cooperative agreements to three different institutions under this competition. If additional funds become available, ECA reserves the right to fund additional Institutes.

Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition. If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process.

**Please note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

**D. Application and Submission Information:**

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, 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 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 section D.3p. Application Deadline and Method of Submission 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](http://www.SAM.gov) until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

**D.3d. 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](http://www.GrantSolutions.gov). To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click "Getting Started-Request a User Account" at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register

again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

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

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

**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 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 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

**D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines:** Pursuant to 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**, such as 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:**

1. the SF-424A which must include the budget request amount for the base-year of the program;
2. 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
3. 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;
  - i. All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up-to-date before ECA will exercise additional non-competitive continuations.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. 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, January 6, 2017**

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](mailto: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 the 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 the ECA 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. Proposals should also indicate how reasonable accommodations for participant needs, including disability accommodations, will be implemented.

**3. Project Evaluation:** As explained in section D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation, 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 the ECA Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

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

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

For a copy of the OMB circular cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov) website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

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

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

*Mandatory:*

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

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, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, tel: 202-632-3337 and email: 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 F.3. Reporting Requirements above.

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

November 4, 2016