

Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY 2017 Fulbright Specialist Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAAE-17-002

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.401

Key Date/Application Deadline: June 6, 2016

Executive Summary: The Office of Academic Exchange Programs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the U.S. Department of State invites proposal submissions for a cooperative agreement to assist in the FY 2017 administration of the Fulbright Specialist Program, pending the availability of funds. The Fulbright Specialist Program is one part of the overall Fulbright Program, which also includes the Fulbright Student and Fulbright Scholar Programs. The Fulbright Specialist Program, a component of the Fulbright Scholar Program, offers opportunities for U.S. academics and professionals (such as attorneys, business professionals, artists, and journalists) whose qualifications and experience are at the faculty or full professional level, to build capacity and promote linkages between their home and overseas host institutions by engaging in short-term, collaborative projects.

For 70 years, the Fulbright Scholar Program has offered awards for college and university faculty, as well as for non-academic professionals and independent scholars, to lecture and conduct research abroad. Tens of thousands of U.S. and non-U.S. scholars and professionals have participated in these exchanges since the Fulbright Program's inception in 1946.

The Fulbright Specialist Program sends approximately 425 U.S. academics and professionals annually to educational and other institutions in all regions of the world for time periods ranging from two to six weeks. Through host institution-designed projects, Specialists share their expertise, strengthen institutional linkages, hone their skills, gain international experience, and learn about other cultures while building capacity at their overseas host institutions, which may include universities, teacher-training institutions, government ministries, cultural institutions, NGOs, and think tanks.

Responsibility for the management of the Fulbright Specialist Program is shared between the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., forty-nine binational Fulbright commissions, approximately 100 U.S. embassies overseas, and the award recipient in the United States solicited through this NOFO. Overall policy guidelines for the Fulbright Specialist Program are determined by the Presidentially-appointed J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (FFSB).

The organization that is awarded the cooperative agreement under this competition will be responsible for program promotion; the recruitment, selection, and monitoring of Fulbright Specialists; matching Fulbright Specialist candidates to host institution-designed projects; disbursement of funds; and record keeping for the Fulbright Specialist Program. ECA expects close collaboration will be expected between the administrators of the Fulbright Scholar and Fulbright Specialist Programs.

This work will be supervised by ECA.

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 this program is contingent upon the availability of FY 2017 funds.

It is ECA's intent to award one cooperative agreement for an estimated total amount of \$3,720,000. Please see section B., Federal Award Information, below for additional details.

A. Program Description:

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

ECA, as sponsor and manager of the Fulbright Specialist Program, plays a significant role in the planning and implementation of all program initiatives, publicity, and promotion, as well as liaison with overseas field partners. ECA will work closely with the award recipient on program promotion, project submission, participant selection and matching procedures, and disbursement of funds. ECA will approve all project proposals and set all country project allocations. The recipient should maintain ongoing contacts with ECA managers throughout the program year. Through this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), ECA seeks new ideas to effectively publicize the program both internationally and in the United States, develop and manage the Fulbright Specialist register, maintain an effective process of matching Specialists to available projects, and develop new protocols for managing multiple funding models, special multi-

country initiatives for specific countries, rapid response projects and other Department initiatives.

A.1. Purpose: The Department of State will provide funding to the successful applicant organization to assist in the administration of the Fulbright Specialist Program. The Fulbright Program was created by the U.S. Congress at the end of World War II to provide the opportunity for future leaders to observe and better comprehend the political, economic, and cultural institutions and societies of other countries and people. In the intervening years, the Fulbright Program has evolved into the premier educational exchange program sponsored by the people of the United States through their federal government, and an important element in the conduct of U.S. foreign affairs. The Fulbright Program, which now extends to more than 150 foreign countries and involves approximately 8,000 participants per year, has helped to form and inform tens of thousands of the world's leaders in every academic and professional field.

One hallmark of the Fulbright Program is its binational character. The United States Government and foreign governments, educational institutions and other public and private entities are all partners in this enterprise. In many countries of the world, financial contributions from governments or public/private sources match or exceed those of the United States government. Because of its binational nature, the profile of the Fulbright Program worldwide reflects a range of objectives and interests.

Under the auspices of the FFSB, approximately 425 U.S. citizens are awarded Fulbright Specialist grants each year through a merit-based, competitive process. The Fulbright Specialist Program offers U.S. scholars and professionals short-term grants of two to six weeks to conduct projects at host institutions overseas. The program provides a short-term, “on-demand” Fulbright resource for host countries to build capacity in a variety of academic fields and to promote long-term collaborative relationships between U.S. and host country higher education institutions or related entities through academic projects that align with Department of State and host country priorities. The program annually supports 425 projects in 140 countries worldwide.

Applicant organizations should demonstrate capacity and intellectual leadership in the field of international exchange, which may include research and engagement with the higher education community, as well as the ability to address priority issues and topics of global importance through international exchange. The cooperating organization should also be prepared to advise ECA on strategies to address U.S. foreign policy priorities as defined by ECA, through engagement with higher education institutions and other relevant organizations in the United States and internationally.

Under the Fulbright Specialist Program, U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions may submit a predetermined number of project proposals to ECA each fiscal year. This program operates on a rolling, year-round basis and includes the following components.

- *Fulbright Specialist Project Development:* U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions solicit projects from foreign higher education institutions or related entities that contribute to the creation of new academic programs or fields of study at host country institutions of higher education; build institutional relationships with U.S. academia; strengthen newly established or developing host country universities; or provide “rapid response” programming that targets emerging needs in specific regions and/or countries such as response to disasters, fast-breaking events and emerging foreign policy priorities. U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions are responsible for submitting Specialist proposals to the award recipient for technical review by the award recipient and then approval by ECA. To develop a project proposal for submission, U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions work with local academic or educational institutions in host countries to design and develop a short-term project that will strengthen and support strategic priorities. Host institutions may be: a) foreign universities or higher education institutions, or b) other institutions which do not grant post-secondary degrees but focus on education. (These may include government institutions and other organizations that support public policy, teacher-training institutions, cultural institutions, NGOs, and think tanks). Specialist projects’ primary activities may include: faculty and teacher training, curriculum or educational materials development and evaluation, consultations on faculty development, and/or needs assessments and program evaluations. ECA also encourages Specialists to give presentations or guest lectures, and carry out small scale research projects as supplemental activities. Fulbright Specialist project proposals outline the Specialist activities, objectives, impact, audience, and host institution, host community and/or home institution cost share.
- *Fulbright Specialist Project Submission:* U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions submit host institution-designed projects online to ECA on a rolling basis until a country’s annual project allocation is reached. The average time from project application to Specialist grantee deployment is currently six months. However, under certain conditions deployment can be within six weeks. Projects may be scheduled to start at any date within one year of submission.
- *Fulbright Specialist Register Development:* The Fulbright Specialist Program maintains an online register of pre-screened, eligible scholars and professionals in a large number of academic fields. Scholars and professionals apply on a rolling basis to the online register. Prospective applicants do not need to be named to a specific project in order to apply to the register. To be admitted to the register, an applicant must pass a review by an independent, academic panel of scholars and professionals. Peer review panels assemble

multiple times per year. Candidates who are approved in the peer review process join the Fulbright Specialist register for a period of up to three years. Once an applicant is placed on the register, s/he is a Fulbright Specialist “candidate” and is eligible to be named to Fulbright Specialist projects. A candidate who has been matched to a specific project is submitted to the FFSB for final approval.

- *Requesting a Fulbright Specialist:* U.S. embassies, Fulbright commissions, and/or foreign host institutions may request Fulbright Specialist candidates on the online register to be matched to their proposed project. Especially in academic fields where there are limited or no pre-screened scholars on the register, embassies, commissions and host institutions may themselves identify U.S. faculty and professionals for their proposed project who are not yet on the register and encourage them to submit an application to the register. Specialist candidates may apply to the register throughout the year on a rolling basis.

In FY 2017, ECA will continue to seek to strengthen exchanges in parts of the world which have been underrepresented in the Fulbright Specialist Program and also to increase participation of underrepresented academic disciplines and professional fields that are relevant for the priorities of the U.S. embassy, the Fulbright commission, and the host institution. ECA seeks innovative recruitment approaches and creative strategies to attract Fulbright Specialists to these regions, and to assist U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions with host institution recruitment challenges overseas.

In a cooperative agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. ECA activities and responsibilities for this program are as follows:

- Participating in the design and direction of all program activities;
- Approving key personnel;
- Approving and providing input on program timelines, agendas and administrative procedures;
- Providing guidance in the execution of all program components;
- Reviewing and approving all program publicity and recruitment materials;
- Providing approval of participating scholars, in cooperation with Fulbright commissions and U.S. embassies, subject to final selection by the FFSB;
- Approving changes to scholars’ proposed field, program, or institution;
- Approving decisions related to special circumstances or problems throughout the duration of the program;
- Assisting with participant emergencies;
- Providing liaison with relevant U.S. embassies, Fulbright commissions and country program officers at the Department of State.

The responsibilities of the award recipient for the administration of the Fulbright Specialist Program are as follows:

- The award recipient is responsible for advertising and recruiting applicants in the United States for the Fulbright Specialist register and all available opportunities.
- The award recipient is responsible for managing a merit-based academic peer review process to recommend candidates for participation in the program. The integrity and independence of that review process is a hallmark of the Fulbright Program.
- The award recipient is responsible for creating and overseeing an online Fulbright Specialist project management system, which allows U.S. embassies, Fulbright commissions, and host institutions to develop and submit Specialist project proposals that are approved by ECA. The online system must also house the Fulbright Specialist register and include a robust module for producing financial (including cost-share), programmatic, and final reports. The award recipient, through the online system, is responsible for matching Specialist candidates to proposed projects. The online system must also produce weekly reports of Specialists going abroad to conduct projects, and an up-to-date accounting of country allocations.
- The award recipient will manage and oversee all aspects of the following: Specialist travel arrangements, individual grant administration, including grant authorization documents, and disbursement of funds.
- The Fulbright Specialist Program must reflect changing conditions and requirements within the U.S. academic community, Department of State and ECA priorities, and varying circumstances and emerging needs in overseas academic environments. The award recipient should be prepared to offer expertise, intellectual input and creative thinking to ECA on current research, pedagogical, administrative, institutional, and other academic issues and concerns to promote the relevance, quality and effectiveness of the Fulbright Specialist Program. The award recipient must demonstrate flexibility to respond quickly to changing priorities and global circumstances when administering the Specialist Program. Based on the Fulbright Specialist Program's direct relevance to current world issues, the award recipient is expected to provide expertise on how academic collaboration and capacity building can most effectively address international policy issues.
- Effective administration of the Fulbright Specialist Program requires close collaboration between ECA, the award recipient in the United States, and Fulbright commissions and U.S. embassies overseas.

B. Federal Award Information:

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

Fiscal Year Funds: 2017

Approximate Total Funding: \$3,720,000, pending the availability of funds

Approximate Number of Awards: 1

Approximate Average Award: \$3,720,000, pending the availability of funds

Floor of Award Range: None.

Ceiling of Award Range: \$3,720,000, pending the availability of funds

Anticipated Award Date: Pending the availability of funds, October 1, 2016.

Anticipated Project Completion Date: December 31, 2019.

Additional Information: Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for at least two additional fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

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). ECA is seeking detailed proposals from accredited post-secondary U.S. institutions (community colleges, liberal arts colleges, public and private universities), consortia of organizations, and/or public and private non-profit organizations meeting the eligibility requirements outlined under Section C.3 below. Consortia applicants must designate a lead institution as the primary award recipient of the Cooperative Agreement.

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.

The award recipient will be expected to continue to provide cost-sharing in future renewal applications at levels comparable to those provided in the initial competition.

C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

- a.)** Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award, in an amount up to \$3,720,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.
- b.)** Technical Eligibility: All proposals must comply with the technical eligibility requirements specified in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) and the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document. Failure to do so will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.
- c.)** The award recipient bears the costs of establishing the offices and staff. No such costs may be included in the budget submission for this program. The award recipient must also have the ability to work electronically with all partners involved in the management of the Fulbright Scholar Program.
- d.)** 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.

D. Application and Submission Information:

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

D.1. Contact Information to Request an Application Package:

Please contact Vincent Pickett or Lana Muck in the Office of Academic Exchange Programs, ECA/A/E, SA-5, 4th Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037 by telephone at 202-632-3243 or 202-632-3233, or by email at PickettVS@state.gov or MuckLS@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement 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.

Please specify Vincent Pickett and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Please read all information before downloading.

D.2a. Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.3p. “Application Deadline and Method of Submission” section below.

D.3a. You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package.

D.3b. All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget.

Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document and the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

D.3c. All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required

information changes or another award is granted. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

D.3d. You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

1. Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.

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

D.3e. In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one-page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

D.3f. If your organization is a private nonprofit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

D.3g. All ECA awards recipient organizations must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing www.GrantSolutions.gov. To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click "Getting Started-Request a User Account" at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

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

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

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

The 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.

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

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau

"shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

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

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your proposed objectives, your anticipated 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 proposed 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 program 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 program is intended to achieve and are 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 the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

D.3k. Virtual Exchange Component: ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our International Exchange Alumni space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

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

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

D.3n Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. Pending the availability of FY 2017 funds, up to \$3,720,000 in U.S. Government funding will be available to support the administration of the Fulbright Specialist Program worldwide in FY 2017. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants should provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase funding amounts pending the availability of funds, the needs of the program, and U.S. State Department foreign policy priorities.

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

Program Costs:

- 1) participant costs, which may include (but must not exceed the rates prescribed by federal travel regulations):
 - a. round-trip international and domestic airfare,
 - b. visa fees,
 - c. ground transportation,
 - d. other transit costs,
 - e. housing accommodations
 - f. meals and incidentals
- 2) additional costs associated with normal administration of exchange programs
- 3) special project-related costs, as approved by ECA, (examples may include project-related additional baggage and procurement of materials)

Administrative Costs:

- 1) staff salaries, benefits, and support services for the program (fringe benefits should be stated separately from salary costs);
- 2) space rental requirements: office rent, furniture, and equipment;
- 3) communications, printing, and publishing, and office supplies used for the program;
- 4) program-related staff travel (may not be required): round trip domestic and/or international airfare, visas, ground transportation, transit costs, and per diem (all per diem must not exceed the rate prescribed by federal travel regulations);
- 5) and other fees associated with the normal administration of exchange programs

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

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

Application Deadline Date: June 6, 2016

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

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA

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

1. *Quality of the Program Idea:* The proposal should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's priorities and mission. Proposed programs should strengthen mutual understanding and the establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.
2. *Program planning and ability to achieve program objectives:* Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. The proposal should clearly demonstrate how the applicant will meet the program's objectives and plans, while demonstrating innovation, productivity, and a commitment to academic excellence. The proposal should demonstrate a capacity for flexibility in the management of the program.
3. *Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability:* Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program's goals. The applicant should demonstrate well-established links to the scholarly and professional community in the U.S. and knowledge of other educational environments as they apply to academic and professional exchange programs. The proposal should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau grants as determined by the Bureau's Grants Division. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
4. *Cost-effectiveness and 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. The proposal should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.
5. *Support of Diversity:* The proposal should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. The proposal should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation, including individual grantee/participant recruitment, selection and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.
6. *Project Evaluation:* The proposal should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a

methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The cooperating organization will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Award Notices:

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

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

The following additional requirements apply to this project:

For assistance awards involving Iran:

A critical component of current U.S. government Iran policy is the support for indigenous Iranian voices. The State Department has made the awarding of grants for this purpose a key component of its Iran policy. As a condition of licensing these activities, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has requested the Department of State to follow certain procedures to effectuate the goals of Sections 481(b), 531(a), 571, 582, and 635(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as amended); 18 U.S.C. §§ 2339A and 2339B; Executive Order 13224; and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6. These licensing conditions mandate that the Department conduct a vetting of potential Iran grantees and sub-grantees for counter-terrorism purposes. To conduct this vetting the Department will collect information from grantees and sub-grantees regarding the identity and background of their key employees and Boards of Directors.

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of Iran complies with requirements, please contact ECA/A/E/NEA Program Officer Janet Arici at 202-632-3340 or AriciJL@state.gov for additional information.

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

All awards made under this competition must be executed according to all relevant U.S. laws and policies regarding assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and to the West Bank and Gaza.

Organizations must consult with relevant Public Affairs Offices before entering into any formal arrangements or agreements with Palestinian organizations or institutions.

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact ECA/A/E/NEA Program Officer Danielle Spitzer at 202-632-3275 or SpitzerDM@state.gov for additional information.

SPECIAL PROVISION FOR PERFORMANCE IN A DESIGNATED COMBAT AREA AND FUTURE CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS (CURRENTLY IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN)

(Revised August 2014)

Each federal assistance award within areas of combat operations or future contingency operation, as designated by the Secretary of Defense (currently Iraq and Afghanistan), over \$150,000 or providing for performance over 30 days must be registered in the Department of Defense maintained Synchronized Pre-deployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) system. Each federal assistance award shall be registered in SPOT before personnel deployment. The DoS SPOT Program Office can assist with entering awards in SPOT. Please send an email to AQMOps@state.gov for information. Information on how to register in SPOT and how to report the total number of recipient personnel deploying under each award will be contained in a Special Provision within each assistance award.

Recipients that do not utilize personnel who are performing a private security function; or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support can be entered through the SPOT aggregate functionality. Upon the award of a grant/and or cooperative agreement in a designated area of combat operations or future contingency operation (currently Iraq and Afghanistan), the Grants Officer or his/her designee will enter the following award information into SPOT to include (i) a brief description of the contract (to the extent consistent with security considerations); (ii) the total value of the contract; and (iii) whether the contract was awarded competitively. The Recipient should send updated deployment numbers for each award sent to the Grants Officer and his/her designee and the Department of State's SPOT program office on a quarterly basis as follows:

The Recipient is required to submit with the quarterly financial report submission information regarding the number of individuals receiving payment from the funds being granted under this award. This report is due 30 days after the calendar year quarter and 90 days after the award period end date and also should be sent to AQMOps@state.gov with the subject line "SPOT Quarterly Report -- Award Number." The following information shall be provided:

1. Total number of individuals receiving payment from the funds being granted:
 - a. Total Number U.S. Personnel Deployed:
 - b. Total Number Host Country Personnel:
 - c. Total Third Country Personnel Deployed:

These reports should be sent to AQMOps@state.gov. The SPOT program office will enter the numbers into SPOT.

Recipients utilizing personnel who are performing a private security function; or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support must be entered into SPOT individually with all required personal information. The Recipient organization will designate a SPOT administrator who will obtain a SPOT company administrator account. Recipients of federal assistance awards shall register personnel in SPOT before deployment, or if already operational in the designated operational area, register personnel upon becoming an employee under the award and maintain current data in SPOT. Procedures on how to register in SPOT will be provided by the Grants Officer and his/her designee.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel. To the extent that such private security contractors (PSCs) are required, Recipients are required to ensure they adhere to Chief of Mission (COM) policies and procedures regarding the operation, oversight, and accountability of PSCs.

In a designated area of combat operations or future contingency operation, the term PSC includes any personnel providing protection of the personnel, facilities, property of a Recipient or sub-recipient at any level, or performing any other activity for which personnel are required to carry weapons in the performance of their duties.

As specific COM policies and procedures may differ in scope and applicability, recipients of federal assistance awards are advised to review post policies and procedures carefully in this regard and direct any questions to the Embassy Regional Security Office (RSO) via the Grants Officer Representative (GOR). Any exclusion to these policies must be granted by the COM via the RSO. COM policies and procedures may be obtained from the RSO via the GOR. Recipients of federal assistance awards are also advised that these policies and procedures may be amended from time to time at the post in response to changing circumstances.

F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following:

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

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

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>

<https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>

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

Mandatory:

- 1) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). 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. The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to GrantSolutions.gov, 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. 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.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation information.)

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

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Vincent Pickett at PickettVS@state.gov or (202) 632-3243 or Lana Muck at MuckLS@state.gov or (202) 632-3233, the Office of Academic Exchange Programs ECA/A/E, SA-5, 4th Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037.

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

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

H. Other Information:

Notice:

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

Mark Taplin
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

April 6, 2016