

Department of State

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

(NOFO): FY 2020 U.S. Speaker Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0006532

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.440

Key Date/Application Deadline: Monday, April 27, 2020

Executive Summary:

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition to support the Office of U.S. Speaker Program. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(3) may submit proposals to provide administrative and programmatic support for the U.S. Speaker Program. Through this cooperative agreement, ECA plans to support approximately 600-700 traveling and virtual programs annually, engaging all regions of the world.

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.

A. Program Description:

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

Purpose:

The Office of the U.S. Speaker Program recruits dynamic American experts (referred to below as U.S. speakers or program participants) to engage international audiences on topics of strategic importance to the United States. Programs are conducted in-person and/or through virtual engagement platforms. Traveling programs generally range from three days to three weeks in length. Virtual programs usually take place on a single specified date and time and may be part of a continuing series. The Program promotes an understanding of U.S. policy priorities and institutions, and the political, economic, social, and cultural context from which they arise. The office conducts approximately 600-700 programs annually worldwide. It collaborates with U.S. embassies and consulates to develop and implement customized programs; identifies and recruits prominent U.S. experts; tailors programs to meet specific needs of international audiences

through workshops, lectures, seminars, podcasts, videos, consultations, and media engagements; utilizes innovative technologies to amplify messaging; and fosters long-term relationships between U.S. speakers and overseas audiences in order to sustain dialogue on key policy issues. U.S. Speakers represent a broad range of expert knowledge and responsible and informed opinion. The U.S. Speaker Program Office staff recruits experts by contacting professional organizations, academic institutions, other Department of State and U.S. government entities, reviewing biographical information, conducting online searches or contacting former speakers for suggestions. All U.S. Speakers must be U.S. citizens.

Specifically, the U.S. Speaker Program goals are to:

- Support U.S. foreign policy goals by enabling U.S. citizen experts in a variety of fields to interact with key professional foreign audiences worldwide, in person and via virtual platforms;
- Identify and recruit the most appropriate U.S. experts to undertake public diplomacy programs in response to Department of State strategic initiatives and requests from U.S. missions abroad;
- To engage in conversations that enable foreign audiences to learn more about U.S. society, culture and institutions, thereby supporting development and growth of political, economic and social institutions abroad.
- Establish sustained relationships and linkages between U.S. Speakers and foreign audiences and institutions in order to share knowledge and skills, increase American global competitiveness, and encourage strong civil society institutions.
- Expand participation of diverse U.S. institutions and Americans in professional exchange programs; and
- Provide timely, comprehensive and high-quality logistics services to ensure that U.S. Speaker Programs are implemented in an effective and appropriate manner.

Using these goals, applicant organizations should identify their own specific objectives, and measurable outputs and outcomes based on the project specifications provided in this solicitation. Proposals should indicate how recipients will achieve the short-term program goals, and how these goals will contribute to the achievement of the stated long-term outcomes. Competitive proposals will include the following:

- Resumes of experienced staff, who have demonstrated a commitment to implement and monitor international exchange projects and ensure outcomes.

- A comprehensive plan to monitor, evaluate, and report on project outcomes in relation to the specific U.S. Speaker Program goals.
- A clear outline and description of the roles and responsibilities of all proposed partner organizations in terms of program logistics, management, and oversight (e.g. the travel arranger and the passport/visa facilitator). Letters of intent from partner organizations and resumes of staff should be provided.
- A specific outline of the type of agreement that will be established between the recipient and the program participants in terms of funding acceptance and possible recovery.
- A specific outline of how funding and airline tickets will be disbursed to program participants, and how passports/visas will be provided.

A1. Substantial Involvement

In a cooperative agreement, the U.S. Department of State is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. The activities and responsibilities of the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program are as follows:

- ECA will identify and recruit all Speakers directly.
- ECA will communicate directly with Department of State field posts regarding program arrangements.
- ECA will provide the recipient with critical travel and program information.
- ECA will oversee the Program budget and allocate programs appropriately among Department of State field posts.
- ECA will work with the recipient to develop standardized templates for the project authorization and airline travel booking.
- ECA will work with the recipient to develop appropriate workflow processes to ensure effective communications between the Department of State and the recipient.
- ECA will directly advise the recipient on the specifics of all travel itineraries and payment amounts for all program participants.
- ECA will handle all programmatic, technical and studio arrangements for virtual program participants.

- ECA will provide accident and health insurance to all U.S. Speaker traveling and Target of Opportunity (TOO) participants.

A2. Recipient Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

- Managing logistical aspects of the U.S. Speaker Program, including booking and issuance of airline tickets, provision of visas (and passports, as necessary). The recipient may choose to engage subaward recipients, such as a travel agency or passport/visa expediting company, to assist in program logistical arrangements.
- Express mailing of passports and visas to program participants.
- Disbursing participant program funding (including the establishment of any necessary agreements regarding funding acceptance and return).
- Monitoring/reporting on actions taken and results achieved.
- Conducting speaker evaluations, which should cover satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and the effects of the program on institutions. See section D.3i. Program Monitoring and Evaluation for additional information.

Initial Request: Confirm receipt of project authorization generally within **one working day** of transmission by the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program. Please note that the recipient will work in consultation with the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program to establish a process for the initiation and acknowledgement of projects, to include the development of a project authorization form. This form will also be used as the basis for reporting on actual expenditures vis-a-vis the amounts initially requested by the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program.

Travel: Generally, within **two working days** of receipt of a Travel Request Form from the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program, the recipient will arrange preliminary flight schedules for program participants and submit them back to the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program for review. Flight requests may include both international travel and in-country program related flights. Please note that the recipient will develop a travel request form in consultation with the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program. Scheduling of travel may involve several conversations between recipient and the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program. Travel requests will be for all regions of the world.

On occasion, U.S. speakers reside in other countries, or may be traveling abroad immediately prior to or after ECA programs. Therefore, travel itineraries must occasionally be booked so that

they start or end in foreign locations. Furthermore, payments and provision of program information may occasionally need to be sent to a foreign location.

Travel arrangements will be needed for approximately 400-500 traveling programs on an annual basis. Please note that the average cost of an airline ticket will be approximately \$7,000, and this amount is subsumed within the average per participant program cost amount noted in the budget section of this document. This is only an average “suggested amount” for informational purposes and is not a “not-to-exceed amount.” Note the following additional requirements for air travel:

- All travel must be Fly America Act compliant and conform with U.S. Government Travel Regulations, including the approved uses of business class travel.
- U.S. Speakers may be eligible for business class seating when the itinerary is in excess of fourteen hours of continuous travel (including layovers, but not official overnight stopovers) from the departure location to the final destination, or if an appropriate medical justification is provided.
- All tickets must be refundable, since there may be last minute changes to itineraries, and cancellations for various reasons.
- Ticket changes and issuance may only be done after approval is given by U.S. Speaker Program staff.
- Once the flight schedule is approved by participating post(s), the program participant, and Office of the U.S. Speaker Program, the recipient will be advised that the airline ticket should be purchased and issued.
- The recipient must be able to respond to last minute requests for itinerary and/or ticket changes, and to issue tickets with less than 24 hours of notice or on weekends.
- The recipient must provide the program participant and the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program with contact numbers for after-hours services, including weekends and holidays.

Financial Disbursements: All financial disbursements should generally be processed within **two working days** of receipt of the detailed project cost authorization from ECA. Recipient must ensure that U.S. Speaker disbursements are provided to the program participants in an expedited manner (e.g. via direct deposit, FedEx or courier), including those for:

- **Traveling Speakers:** Payments to participants may include per diem at standard U.S. Government (USG) rates, an honorarium of U.S. Dollars (USD) \$200 for non-USG employees, a book and educational materials allowance of USD \$150-300, and allowances for various other expenses (e.g. taxis, ground transportation, train fares,

vaccinations, airport entry and departure fees, etc., generally at USD \$150-300. The U.S. Speaker Program Office will inform the recipient of the amount to be paid to each program participant in the project cost authorization.

- **Target of Opportunity (TOO):** TOO Speakers are most often already in an overseas country or region on their own business, and are willing to make themselves available for a few days of programming arranged by a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. In these cases, the TOO U.S. Speaker will receive a daily USD \$200 honorarium, per diem, and special allowances, as necessary, for actual program days only. In certain cases, airline or other travel expenses may also be covered. Estimated costs for TOO Speakers are included in the estimated “per participant” program costs noted in the budget section of this document.
- **Virtual Speakers:** Payment will include a USD \$200 honorarium and may include a nominal miscellaneous expense allowance to cover taxis and parking. Approximately 150-200 virtual programs occur in a fiscal year, and each program usually occurs on a single date/time. The recipient is only responsible for disbursing payment to virtual speakers (i.e. airline tickets and passports/visas will not be required).

The U.S. Speaker Program reserves the right to disburse less or more than the customary funding amounts described above.

Passports/Visas: The recipient must arrange, secure and disburse approximately 250 visas and 30 passports (new, renewal or secondary), and handle up to 15 requests for extra passport pages during a period of performance. Passport/Visa services should include providing program participants with instructions and necessary application forms; confirming receipt of such information and forms; providing for express mailing of completed applications and passport from the participant back to the recipient or sub-recipient; application drop-off and pickup from the appropriate foreign Embassy, Consulate, visa service provider or U.S. Passport Agency; and, express mailing of passports/visas back to the program participant. Processing is to be conducted at the recipient or sub-recipient’s site.

Additional details and requirements for passports/visa processing are indicated below:

- The recipient must be able to respond to all passport and visa requests, regardless of the difficulty, at times on short notice. The successful completion of a project by a U.S. Speaker Program participant may require the traveler, often located outside of the Washington, D.C. area, to obtain a visa(s) or passport. ECA requires that the recipient provide support services (possibly through the engagement of a sub-recipient) to assist these travelers in obtaining passports and visas. Assistance includes working directly with the program participant to complete forms, answer questions about the application process, correct erroneous or incomplete paperwork.

- The recipient should use “regular” processing for visas, passports and extra pages when time permits. Expedited processing must be approved in advance by the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program.
- The recipient should plan on covering costs of overnight and express mailings of applications and passports to and from program participants.
- The recipient must maintain knowledge of up-to-date visa requirements for all foreign countries, and provide this info to the U.S. Speaker Program Office, as necessary.
- The recipient must advise the U.S. Speaker Program Officer of any correspondence (e.g. letters of invitation, forms), or any other special requirements necessary for obtaining a visa, within 24-48 hours of receipt of passport/visa request. Based on the requirements identified by the recipient or sub-recipient, U.S. missions or ECA would provide the recipient with any required supporting documents from in-country governments or partners, or from the U.S. government.
- The recipient should communicate directly via phone or e-mail with the U.S. Speaker Program Office generally within a **two working-day period** to confirm receipt of passport/visa request worksheet.
- The recipient should confirm completion of visa/passport process; and advise immediately the status of problems and unexpected delays in processing requests, (e.g. program participant has not completed and returned visa or passport applications in a timely manner, has not provided required materials, or foreign Mission has indicated a difficulty with processing or denial).
- The recipient or sub-recipient should send visa/passport application forms and instructions directly to the Program Participant via e-mail, courier or overnight delivery and confirm the Program Participant’s receipt of materials.
- The recipient should initiate and hold quarterly status reporting meetings with the U.S. Speaker Program to discuss successes, new procedures, problems, suggestions for improvement, etc.

Mailings and Payment Issuance: U.S. Speakers should receive their payments, visas/passports, and travel tickets (or e-ticket receipts) **two weeks prior** to the start of their programs. The recipient should plan on at least 50 express mail shipments to program participants.

Project Cost Reporting: The recipient will submit monthly project reports. The recipient should provide ECA with **Final Project Cost Reports for each discrete U.S. Speaker Project**. These reports should be provided to the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program as soon as possible, but no later than **two weeks** after project completion. The cost categories for each project are the

same as those on the Project Authorization. Data such as operating, statistical, and financial information relating to the program may be requested by the U.S. Department of State to meet its reporting requirements and answer queries concerning the operation of the Program.

Evaluations: On a monthly basis, the recipient will submit individual U.S. Speaker feedback from key evaluation questions after program completion. The recipient will also compile quarterly reports, which show aggregate speaker feedback for programs during that period. The format will be determined in collaboration with the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program. Please see section D.3i. Program Monitoring and Evaluation for additional information.

Tax Requirements: As appropriate, the recipient must comply with all applicable Federal, State and Local laws on tax withholding and/or reporting for all participants funded under this award.

Additional Information: The recipient will retain the name “U.S. Speaker Program” to identify the professional exchange program. Any materials and correspondence related to the program will acknowledge this as a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State.

B. Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA’s level of involvement in this program is listed under A1. Substantial Involvement under A. Program Description.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2020

Approximate Total Funding: \$4,200,000

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Approximate Average Award: \$4,200,000

Floor of Award Range: none

Ceiling of Award Range: \$4,200,000

Anticipated Award Date: July 1, 2020

Anticipated Project Completion Date: January 5, 2022

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 two additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

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.

C. Eligibility Information:

C.1. Eligible applicants: U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit applications for this competition. Applicants must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information. All applicants must also have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and be registered in SAM.gov (see additional information about this requirement in D.3a and D.3c below).

C.2. 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 exceeding \$130,000 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 requirements stated in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.
- c.) The award recipient must have an office and staff in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area that are dedicated to working on this award. Applicants who do not currently have an office with program staff in Washington, D.C., should include in their proposal a detailed plan for establishing an office with staff to work on this award by July 1, 2020. The organization must have the capability to arrange and track travel, visa/passport and funding disbursement, including the disbursement of funds and the issuing of airline tickets in less than 24-hours, for each speaker and provide regular updates to the Office of the U.S. Speaker Program.
- d.) 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.

C.3. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. ECA reminds applicant organizations that all proposed costs must be reasonable, applicable and allocable. 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 Guidance 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 may be reduced in like proportion.

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 the U.S. Department of State, Office of the U.S. Speaker Program, ECA/P/S, SA-05, Room 03CC16, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, 202-632-9245 (office telephone) or e-mail PitmanIE@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

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

Please specify Imani Esparza Pitman 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 <https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov>.

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. Unique Entity Identifier 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 (Data Universal Numbering System or DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package. For more detailed instructions for obtaining a UEI (DUNS) number, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

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

D.3c. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM): 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. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts. Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>

D.3.d. Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System (FAPIIS): Prior to making a Federal Assistance award over \$250,000, the Federal agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in FAPIIS (see 41 U.S.C. 2313) and accessible through SAM.gov. If an Applicant is currently in FAPIIS, they can comment on any information about its organization that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in FAPIIS, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

D.3e. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (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 award 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 program 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. Required Registration with SAMS Domestic: All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic by accessing <https://mygrants.service-now.com> and clicking the "create an account" link. SAMS Domestic is the U.S. Department of State's grants management system and is supported by the Department's Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). Recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories that have previously used SAMS Domestic as a U.S. Department of State award recipient do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact the ILMS Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Recipient Organizations and recipient contacts and signatories is available 24 hours, 7 days a week (except federal holidays), and can be reached at 1-888-313-ILMS (4567) or through the ILMS Self Service Portal at <https://afsitsm.service-now.com/ilms/home>.

In the event the ILMS Help Desk is unable to provide you with assistance in a timely manner, please contact ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov and copy the program officer associated with the solicitation.

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

D.3g. FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY - 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. 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-4E (Bldg. 3)
2430 E Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20037

D.3h. 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.3i. Program Monitoring and Evaluation: Please note: The Bureau plans to add standardized indicators and corresponding data collection questions for performance monitoring during the period of performance of this award. Therefore, proposed performance monitoring plans and data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established. Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project's objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame), the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs

include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
3. **Participant behavior**, 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.3j. 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.3k. Budget Format: Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. Budget requests may not exceed \$4,200,000. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and project budgets. Please provide a detailed budget of every

cost associated with each project. The more information and detail that recipients provide about the proposed budget, with a budget narrative, the better ECA can determine the viability and completeness of proposals. For the budget line item “indirect costs” or “administrative overhead,” figures provided without a specific breakout will be returned for additional information or rejected.

D.3l. Key Personnel

ECA recommends that the applicant identify intended key personnel positions via an asterisk (*) or other marking in the proposal budget, budget narrative, or a separate appendix. If not provided in the application, recipients must submit the names, titles, and brief biographical sketches of key personnel to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department’s Standard Terms and Conditions, VI. Recipient Responsibility and Compliance with Federal Requirements (link to: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>).

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

1. Salaries
2. Fringe Benefits
3. Travel (note: it is not likely that the recipient organization will need to engage in travel)
4. Equipment
5. Supplies
6. Contractual
7. Other Direct Costs

Note on General Program Costs: For the purposes of this cooperative agreement, applicants should base the “General Program Costs” (i.e. participant program costs) section of their proposal on 400 traveling U.S. Speaker Programs (including “Target of Opportunity Programs”) at an average cost of \$9,000 per program, and 150 virtual programs at an average cost of \$225 per program. This is a total of approximately \$3,600,000 for traveling “participant program costs” and \$33,750 for virtual “participant program costs,” with a combined program cost of \$3,633,750. The average global cost of airfare for each program is approximately \$7,000, and this figure is subsumed under the per program cost listed above. Additionally, 50 express mailings (e.g. FedEx) to program participants across the U.S. should also be budgeted. Sub-Awards (e.g. for passport/visa facilitator and travel services organization) should likely be included under General Program Costs.

When determining needs for a travel services sub-recipient (as appropriate), please use an average figure of 400 airline tickets to be issued during a period of performance.

When determining needs for a passport/visa services sub-recipient (as appropriate), please use an average figure of up to 250 visas, up to 30 passports (new, renewal, and secondary), and up to 15 requests for extra passport pages to be provided during a period of performance.

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

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

Application Deadline Date: Monday, April 27, 2020

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

D.3o. Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures

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

How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

Applicants should read instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

The registration process can take up to four weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines. Applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov. Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov

For access to complete instruction on how to apply for Notice of Funding Opportunities on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>

Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission issues 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

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, D.C. 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.

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

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When ECA successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgement of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Please also be mindful of any Grants.gov generated error messages that may appear during the application process as they may result in some documents not transmitting correctly.

Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

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 "Applicant FAQs" 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. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

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. Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>.

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.3p. 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 U.S. 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. Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful international exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. The applicant organization should demonstrate the ability to fully and effectively carry out the program and required logistics.
- 2. Program Planning:** Proposals should provide details on how tasks will be undertaken including arrangements for disbursement of funds, issuance of visas, passports and air travel tickets, and complying with all U.S. Government regulations. Proposals should show a demonstrated ability to quickly make changes to airline reservations and tickets, issue timely program payments, and carry out tasks necessary to ensure successful program implementation. Recipient must be able to disburse funds and issue airline tickets in less than 24-hours. Recipients should provide a detailed work plan demonstrating an understanding of the program as described above.
- 3. Cost Effectiveness:** 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 in relation to proposed activities and anticipated results.

- 4. Ability to Achieve Program Objectives:** The objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
- 5. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and evaluation. 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:** Proposals 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. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports.

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.

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 Guidance 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 Guidance 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:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb>

<https://www.state.gov/m/a/ope/index.htm>

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

- 1.) Performance Progress Reports (PPRs) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's [SAMS Domestic](#).
- 2.) The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' 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 [SAMS Domestic](#), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Cooperative Agreements/Grants.

In the event you are having difficulty uploading reports and the ILMS help desk is not providing sufficient assistance, please email ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov.

- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 4.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.
- 5.) Ad Hoc Requests: Data such as operating, statistical, and financial information relating to the program may be requested by the U.S. Department of State to meet its reporting requirements and answer queries concerning the operation of the Program. While not required, written reports may be submitted when warranted by programmatic needs during the project, either at the initiative of the recipient, or at the request of ECA.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.3i. 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.

F.4. Program Data Requirements: Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

1. Name, address, and contact information of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
2. Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and countries in which any exchange experiences take place, and a list of visas/passports issued.

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Imani Esparza Pitman, U.S. Department of State, Office of the U.S. Speaker Program, ECA/P/S, SA-5, 3rd floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, 202-632-9245, email: PitmanIE@state.gov.

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

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

H. Other Information:**Notice:**

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

Marie Royce
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Date: Feb 25, 2020