

Department of State

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

(NOFO): FY 2021 BridgeUSA Leadership Development Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0007926

Assistance Listing (CFDA) Number: 19.451

Key Date/Application Deadline: June 4, 2021

Executive Summary: The Private Sector Exchange Directorate (ECA/EC) of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for the administration of the FY 2021 BridgeUSA Leadership Development Program. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to conduct a leadership enrichment program for active SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) status BridgeUSA (J1) exchange program participants with six months or more remaining at the time of selection. The award recipient will organize and implement approximately ten leadership development seminars in Washington, DC, for a total of 150-200 BridgeUSA exchange visitors (EV). Seminars will include three days of facilitated training on a theme of leadership that includes U.S. Department of State officials and one day of participant proposed leadership action plan presentations. On the final day exchange visitors will present their action plans to address problems they identify in their home communities. Their action plans will be based upon knowledge gained during the 3-day facilitated training portion of the seminar. Following the conclusion of the U.S.-based portion of the program, EVs may compete for small grants to assist them in implementing their action plans in their local communities. All seminars should start with a one-day cultural immersion tour of national monuments and U.S. historical sites in Washington, DC, that reflect on American historical democratic institutions, leadership themes and values. A leadership curriculum will be an integral part of the program and directly complement the U.S.-based exchange, reinforce collaborative activities, and support peer learning. The BridgeUSA Leadership Program will also include a “BridgeUSA Leadership Network” and robust follow-on alumni activities.

Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. Applicants submitting more than one proposal will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

The BridgeUSA Leadership Development award recipient will work in partnership with ECA/EC to coordinate administrative processes, support networking and alumni activities, and develop common templates to provide consistent and robust programming. This will include the development of standardized materials and timelines. Additionally, the award recipient will have primary responsibility for the creation of a BridgeUSA Leadership Development Program Social Media Site for participants and alumni. This site will include leadership development curriculum materials.

The BridgeUSA Leadership Development award recipient will have the primary oversight responsibility for recruitment and selection of a diverse group of participants from the following J1 categories: College/ University Student, Secondary School Student, Summer Work and Travel (SWT), Au Pair, Trainee, Intern, Teacher, Camp Counselor, Research Scholar, Short-Term Scholar, Specialist, Professor, and Alien Physician. Applicants should recruit EVs from as many BridgeUSA sponsors as feasible. The award recipient should plan seminars that include EVs of similar age, background and interests. For example, ECA recommends the award recipient conduct specific seminars for SWT and Camp Counselors; Intern/Trainee; College/ University Student; Research/Short Term Scholars/Professors/Specialists/Alien Physicians. At the conclusion of each seminar the award recipient will present a small grant award to a selected participant based on their leadership action plan presentation. The award recipient will have responsibility for monitoring these small grant follow-on activities. The BridgeUSA Leadership Development award recipient will work in close coordination on many program components, in consultation with ECA.

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: In order to enhance the U.S. Department of State's engagement with BridgeUSA exchange visitors in support of U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' (ECA), Private Sector Exchange Directorate (ECA/EC), will issue a cooperative agreement for \$500,000, pending the availability of funds, to conduct the FY 2021 BridgeUSA Leadership Development Program.

Background: Through its oversight of BridgeUSA, the Private Sector Exchange Directorate (ECA/EC) supports the mission of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) by facilitating educational and cultural exchange programs for approximately 300,000 exchange visitors who come to the United States each year to participate in 13 different program categories. ECA/EC designates and monitors approximately 1,500 "sponsor organizations" that recruit, place, and monitor "exchange visitors" from more than 200 countries and territories.

Through person-to-person exchanges, BridgeUSA supports the Department's foreign policy objectives and strategic priorities, e.g., creating resilient communities, addressing disinformation

by supporting civil society, open transparent institutions, global health, climate change, diversity and inclusion, and human rights. Since 2006, over four million exchange visitors have participated in BridgeUSA programs. Exchange visitors who experience successful BridgeUSA programs become "citizen ambassadors" who share their new understanding of American values with their friends and family upon return home. In partnership with designated sponsors, ECA/EC recognizes that the foundation of successful exchanges is ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of all program participants. Other factors that contribute to successful experiences include safe and secure housing and transportation; integration into the community/workplace; and acquisition of new skills, including improved English language proficiency. The Department and program sponsors continuously seek ways to improve all programmatic components to ensure the development of a large cadre of program alumni who serve as lifelong citizen ambassadors.

This cooperative agreement seeks to further expand ECA/EC's engagement with BridgeUSA exchange visitors by offering leadership development opportunities in Washington, D.C., and providing opportunities for these program alumni to connect with one another and build on their exchange experience through small grant funding.

Goals: The mission of ECA/EC provides countless opportunities for international candidates looking to travel and gain experience in the United States. The multifaceted programs enable foreign nationals to come to the United States to teach, study, conduct research, demonstrate special skills or receive on the job training for periods ranging from a few weeks to several years. ECA/EC's mission – to increase mutual understanding between Americans and people of other countries – remains vital to U.S. national security and building people-to-people connections around the world. Through the FY 2021 BridgeUSA Leadership Development Program, ECA/EC aims to:

1. Promote mutual understanding and lasting partnerships between emerging leaders from foreign countries and the United States;
2. Provide opportunities for J1 participants in active SEVIS status to collaborate and share ideas, approaches, and strategies to develop solutions to pressing local and global challenges;
3. Increase Americans' global competitiveness through new and expanded partnerships with alumni professionals from around the world;
4. Create resilient communities and address disinformation by supporting civil society, open transparent institutions, global health, climate change, diversity and inclusion, and human rights; and
5. Build a global network of like-minded professionals committed to creating positive change in their workplaces and communities.

Professional Development Seminars and Career Opportunities: "Seminars" are defined as a set of learning, leadership, and networking activities for exchange visitors, focused on building professional development and skills-training. The three day seminars should specifically focus on how exchange visitors can leverage cross-cultural skills, language competencies, or

international knowledge gained on their exchange programs to succeed in the local and global economy. Every in-person seminar should be accompanied by virtual opportunities to expand the reach of the program and may include access to continuing education materials, mentorship programs, or other professional development activities where feasible.

Small Grant Program: The small grants program component should provide a competitive opportunity for any EV seminar participant who wants to apply to propose an action plan up to \$2,500 that build on their project developed through the BridgeUSA Leadership Development Program and in support of ECA and foreign policy goals. Project activities can take place overseas and should multiply the effects of participants' leadership development seminar experience. Local U.S. Embassy Public Affairs staff may be present to observe these local activities. The participant's action plan would be presented during the seminar and detail how they can positively impact their communities.

Small Grant requirements: Seminar participants must submit an Executive Summary (not to exceed one (1) page, in a Word Document) that outlines proposed project goals, objectives, activities, etc.

- **The Executive Summary should include a brief section that explicitly states (1) the problem statement addressed by the project, (2) research-based evidence justifying the unique project approach, and (3) quantifiable project outcomes and impacts.**
- For example, expected outcomes should include the creation of new opportunities for alumni to constructively contribute to society, the advancement of democratic structures in home communities that enhance the trust young leaders have in government institutions, and increased local community resilience for example, to recruitment by violent radical groups by effectively countering disinformation.

In close coordination with the Private Sector Exchange Directorate, the award recipient should be prepared to manage the grant management process, including but not limited to, oversee application submissions, propose a review process, oversee the transfer of funds, and monitor and evaluate small grants for projects taking place in countries around the world.

Organizational Capacity: Applicant organizations must demonstrate in their proposals their capacity for conducting international educational and cultural exchanges, supporting exchange alumni engagement activities, and providing substantive programming for up-and-coming leaders.

Applicants should also illustrate in their proposals the breadth of their experience working in international exchange and a record of flexibility and adaptability in programming under short timelines or challenging conditions. Proposals should include concrete examples in which the organization has responded quickly to rapidly evolving circumstances, including, if possible, examples that demonstrate the ability to recruit participants from a diverse and geographically dispersed community.

In addition, applicants must demonstrate the breadth of their experience working with emerging leaders, including professional development programming, virtual engagement, and the

development of action plans, alumni networks and small grant opportunities. Applicant organizations must demonstrate the ability to manage small grants initiatives for exchange alumni, provide resources for alumni to draw on in developing strong proposals, and facilitate a transparent process for selecting competitive proposals that include U.S. Department of State representation. The proposed process must also include a robust monitoring and evaluation plan that will enable the Department of State to measure impact following the term of the cooperative agreement. Applicants should also demonstrate the ability to responsibly transfer and monitor funds for projects taking place in countries around the world.

Partner Organizations: Applicants should provide examples of organizations and individuals with whom they would collaborate, including BridgeUSA sponsors and describe previous cooperative activities. One approach would be for a proposal to choose a hypothetical leadership development seminar and provide a proposed plan for developing the program, with examples of organizations or individuals upon whom the applicant would rely to develop the most appropriate substantive aspects of the program design. Strong proposals should include partners that may assist in the selection of participants and follow-up on small grant awards.

Guidelines:

The cooperative agreement will begin on or about September 1, 2021. The award period should be approximately 36 months in duration, and cover all aspects of program planning, professional development activities, and the small grants program for BridgeUSA alumni. Applicants should propose a timeline for the three years, including potential seminar dates and planning milestones. Applicants should also provide a sample agenda for a seminar. Applicants should propose to hold approximately ten seminars for approximately 20-25 participants each with five alternate candidates in the event a selected participant is unable to attend. Seminars should take place in Washington, D.C.

The applicant should also propose a timeline for implementing the small grant program. The applicant should plan to implement at least one small grant for each seminar.

All award activities, including leadership development seminars and grant competition activities must be completed prior to the anticipated end date of the award, September 1, 2024. Applicants should propose specific seminar dates and key small grant benchmarks, but the exact timing may be altered through the mutual agreement of the U.S. Department of State and the award recipient, based on the flexible, rapid response approach preferred.

ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal project configurations, budgets, number of seminars, number and size of small grants, and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

Please note:

In a cooperative agreement, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine grant monitoring. ECA/EC's activities and responsibilities for the FY 2021 BridgeUSA Leadership Development Program are as follows:

- 1) Provide advice and assistance in the execution of all program components.
- 2) Approve internal timelines to achieve seminar and small grant program roll-out.
- 3) Approve selection criteria for small grants and serve on final selection panel.
- 4) Approve final list of small grant recipients after selection panels.
- 5) Provide input for and final approval of each seminar, including speakers and trainers.
- 6) Approve promotional materials and final calendar of activities for each seminar and for the small grants program.
- 7) Assist with promotion of seminars and grant opportunities to the alumni community.
- 8) Work closely with award recipient and provide feedback following each seminar and program component to identify areas of improvement.

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

- 1) Manage logistical arrangements and fees for the leadership development seminars, including managing contracts, arranging technical equipment, staffing, travel, and seminar organization.
- 2) Design and plan seminar sessions and activities to develop the participants' knowledge and skill base related to leadership development.
- 3) Identify speakers, trainers, and local business contacts to participate in the leadership development seminars and follow-on activities.
- 4) Develop appropriate virtual and follow-on activities, such as webinars, mentorship programs, and other opportunities.
- 5) Develop and execute a communications strategy to manage recruitment and provide participating exchange visitors with program materials and logistical information prior to each seminar.
- 6) Facilitate a small grants program for exchange visitors, not to exceed \$2,500 per participant award or \$25,000 total for this NOFO, including developing the application process, creating a system for application review, developing a grants manual for participants, and creating a plan to monitor grant expenditures and activities.
- 7) Develop resources and assist participants in developing competitive proposals.
- 8) Oversee the responsible transfer and monitoring of funds to selected exchange visitors for projects that take place in their home countries.
- 9) Establish a reporting plan for recipients of the small grants program, and regularly update ECA with the results of alumni projects.
- 10) Collaborate with ECA to design and implement an evaluation plan that assesses the short- and medium-term impact of the program on participants, and that will enable ECA to assess long-term impact. Prepare and provide interim M&E reports as agreed.

Additional Information:

All materials, publicity, 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. The Bureau will retain copyright use of and be allowed to distribute materials related to this program as it sees fit.

What to Include in Your Proposal

Executive Summary. The Executive Summary should be one page in length, formatted in Times New Roman 12 with one-inch margins. The Executive Summary should include program title, goals of the program, names of potential partner organizations responsible for project implementation, proposed numbers of activities and participants, and a general outline of the seminars and small grant program.

Proposal Narrative. In no more than 20 double-spaced pages the narrative should include:

Project Goals, Objectives, Anticipated Outcomes. A clear, succinct statement of program goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes that expand upon program goals as stated in this NOFO. Objectives should be described in specific, measurable, and realistic terms that are achievable within the scope of the program, both in terms of time and funding. They should be framed from the participant perspective, i.e., "By (time), the participants will..." Proposals that clearly delineate salient objectives in measurable terms and plan activities in a sequence that progressively leads to achieving those objectives, will be considered more competitive.

Project Management Plan. A simple project management plan for the life of the program that lists, in table format, proposed outputs (major events or tasks performed by the recipient organization or partners), dates, and the person or group responsible.

Background Information on Implementing Organizations. Information on proposed organizations and staff involved in the implementation of the project, including the mission, relevant expertise in conducting programs of a related nature, including on-going and planned activities not including the proposed project. If the applicant has received awards from ECA in the past, please list examples of relevant projects by office (Citizen Exchanges, International Visitors, Academic Exchanges, etc.), including project name, countries, year, and amount.

Roles and Responsibilities. A clear delineation of proposed roles and responsibilities for the potential award recipient and sub-recipient(s) in terms of project logistics, management, resources, and oversight.

Support of Diversity. A description on how the Bureau's policy on Support of Diversity will be integrated into all aspects of the seminar, including but not limited to program materials and training methodology. Please refer to guidance in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) under D.3g. "Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines."

Budget. Please refer to section D.3m in this document for allowable costs and the PSI for guidance on formatting your budget.

Acknowledging ECA's Financial Support. An acknowledgment to follow guidance in the PSI entitled "Acknowledgment of ECA's Financial Support and Use of the Department Seal." Proposals should also indicate agreement to use the "BridgeUSA" logo in all relevant program materials, applications, websites, and other related materials.

Resumes. Resumes of principal staff of all partner organizations involved in the implementation of the project should be included. Resumes should be no more than two pages in length.

Letters of Commitment and/or Letters of Support. Letters of commitment or support from partner organizations/partner institutions that demonstrate a capacity to arrange and conduct U.S. and overseas activities should also be included.

Project Materials. Materials that help demonstrate seminar design and implementation should be included. These include:

- 1) Sample calendar outline
- 2) Sample seminar agenda
- 3) Draft materials to support the alumni small grants program
- 4) Sample evaluation and survey instruments
- 5) List of potential in-country partners
- 6) Project management plan
- 7) Sample social media plan
- 8) Draft promotional materials
- 9) Sample application

Unsolicited Documents. Attachments that do not directly address the proposed project (i.e., organization brochures, pamphlets, unsolicited reports) are strongly discouraged.

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: FY2021

Approximate Total Funding: \$500,000, pending the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Approximate Average Award: \$500,000, pending the availability of funds.

Floor of Award Range: \$500,000, pending the availability of funds.

Ceiling of Award Range: \$500,000, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Award Date: September 1, 2021, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Project Completion Date: September 1, 2024

Additional Information: The cooperative agreement will be awarded for a period of performance ending September 1, 2024. This award will cover three years of activity.

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 D3a and D3c below).

C.2. Eligible Countries and Themes: Under this NOFO, a single award will be issued for the following regions: Continental United States and its Territories including Guam and Puerto Rico. **Applicants can submit only one proposal.** Proposals must address only the combination of eligible J1 categories and themes listed below. ECA reserves the right to modify the final list of participating categories and themes.

Complete descriptions of the five eligible themes are below: Proposals should support approximately ten seminars for approximately 150-200 exchange visitors. The BridgeUSA Leadership Development award recipient will have the primary responsibility for recruitment and selection of a diverse group of participants from the following J1 categories: College/ University Student, Secondary School Student, Summer Work and Travel (SWT), Au Pair, Trainee, Intern, Teacher, Camp Counselor, Research Scholar, Short-Term Scholar, Specialist, Professor, and Alien Physician. Program recruitment can and should include EVs from any sponsor of J1 BridgeUSA programs. Award recipient should consider hosting seminars for EVs of similar age and experience. Example: specific seminars for SWT and Camp Counselors; Intern/Trainee; Research/Short Term Scholars. Seminars can address any or all of the following four program themes:

- 1. Civic Engagement:** Proposals submitted under the Civic Engagement theme should explore how individuals can organize around community issues and support professionals involved in non-governmental management; community development; advocacy; education; journalism; law; youth initiatives; and the empowerment of women, youth, minorities, persons with disabilities, and marginalized populations. Proposals submitted under this theme might include an emphasis in NGO management; staff training and development; volunteer management; conducting community outreach and public relations; creating strategic partnerships and coalition building; conflict resolution and tolerance; and education programs.
- 2. Media and Communications:** Proposals submitted under the Media and Communications theme should support professionals involved in print and broadcast media and journalism; social or transmedia; press relations; public relations; public

affairs; and communications. Proposals submitted under this theme might include an emphasis on freedom of the press; ethical journalism, countering disinformation and misinformation; audience engagement, media entrepreneurship, creating compelling narratives and storytelling; and new trends in digital media and communications.

3. **Governance and Society:** Proposals submitted under the Governance and Society theme should explore the relationship between the public sector and broader society. Proposals should support professionals involved in the legislative process; governance; public administration; policy making; political campaigns; law and judicial reform. Proposals submitted under this theme might include an emphasis on rule of law; access to justice; civil liberties, anti-corruption; and transparency and accountability.
4. **Economic Empowerment:** Proposals submitted under the Economic Empowerment theme should explore how systems can support sustainable economic development and should support professionals involved in small and medium business development; business administration; business education; economic development policy, social entrepreneurship, and community training programs. Proposals submitted under this theme might include an emphasis on starting or growing small businesses; community-based and educational training programs; global competency and employment readiness; the role of government in promoting economic growth; sustainable development; education to employment; and the economic empowerment of women, youth, minorities, persons with disabilities, and marginalized populations.

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 include it 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. 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 will be reduced in like proportion.

C.4. 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 of approximately \$500,000, to support program and administrative costs required to implement this leadership development 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 NOFO, POGI (if applicable), 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.) Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition. If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. **Please note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

D.) Application and Submission Information:

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, 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 Private Sector Exchange Directorate, ECA/EC, SA-4, U.S. Department of State, 2430 E Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, 202-676-7895, OngaoE@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 contact the Private Sector Exchange Directorate, ECA/EC, SA-4, U.S. Department of State, 2430 E Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, 202-304-8369, BenzeDK@state.gov 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.3n. "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. 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.servicenowservices.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.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>.

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.

D.3f. 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, DC 20037

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.3g. 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.3h. 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.3i. 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.3j. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients: All ECA 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. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

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) Travel: International and domestic airfare; airline baggage and seat fees; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs for American participants. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act.

2) Per Diem. For U.S.-based programming, organizations should use the published Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>. ECA requests applicants to budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed Federal per diem rates. Foreign per diem rates can be accessed at: https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp

3) Consultants. Consultants (i.e. trainers, speakers, etc.) may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Honoraria rates should not exceed \$250 per day per session. Organizations are encouraged to cost-share rates that would exceed that figure. Subaward recipients and subcontracting organizations may also be employed, in which case the written agreement between the prospective award recipient and subaward recipient or subcontractor should be included in the proposal. Subawards and subcontracts should detail the division of responsibilities and proposed costs, and subawards and subcontracts should be itemized in the budget.

4) Room Rental. The rental of meeting space should not exceed \$250 per day per activity. Any rates that exceed this amount should be cost shared.

5) Materials. Proposals may contain costs to purchase, develop and translate materials for fellows. Costs for high quality translation of materials should be anticipated and included in the budget.

6) Working Meal. One working meal may be provided during program. Per capita costs for working meals may not exceed \$45/person, excluding room rental and other overhead charges. The number of invited guests may not exceed seminar participants by more than a factor of two to one.

7) Administrative Costs. Costs necessary for the effective administration of the project may include salaries for employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the PSI. Proposals should show strong administrative cost sharing contributions

from the applicant, the in-country partner and other sources. Award recipient staff travel should NOT be included in the exchange participant numbers.

8) Reasonable Accommodations. Organizations should budget for the reasonable accommodations of participating individuals with disabilities. Proposals may allocate up to 5% of the total requested ECA award funds for this purpose.

9) Post-Seminar Engagement. Reasonable costs related to post-seminar engagement and alumni activities may be included. The proposal must include an outline of any proposed post-seminar engagement and alumni activities. Proposals should also demonstrate how the recipient organization will creatively utilize technology and online networking sites to enhance and amplify alumni programming.

10) Alumni Small Grants Program. Organizations should include appropriate small grant funds as well as any administrative costs to administer and monitor the small grant program.

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

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

Application Deadline Date: Friday, June 4, 2021

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 11:59 p.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 the application deadline date and time 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 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:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission.
- 2. Program planning:** A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. The agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.
- 3. 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.

4. Multiplier effect/impact: Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages, and networks.

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 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. Institutional Capacity and Record/ Ability: Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful 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.

7. 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.

8. 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. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

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 as identified in the application.

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

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 120 calendar days after the cooperative agreement/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 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award;

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: Elizabeth Ongao, U.S. Department of State, BridgeUSA, ECA/EC, 2430 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, by telephone, 202-676-7895 or email OngaoE@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.

Matthew Lussenhop
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

March 29, 2021