

**Department of State**

**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY 2020 Community Solutions Program**

**Announcement Type:** New Cooperative Agreement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** SFOP0006611

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 19.415

**Key Date/Application Deadline:** May 8, 2020

**Executive Summary:** The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs invites proposal submissions for the FY 2020 Community Solutions Program (Community Solutions) in Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa, South and Central Asia, and the Western Hemisphere. 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 this international leadership program. Created in 2010, Community Solutions is a global initiative that supports engaged community leaders, ages 25-38, working to address economic, environmental, political, and social challenges confronting their local communities. Community Solutions Fellows will undertake a four- to six-month U.S.-based fellowship program in public institutions, government offices, state legislatures, social incubators, businesses, or non-profit organizations, working with seasoned community leaders on pre-defined substantive issues of mutual interest. The program will include a robust on-line and blended leadership training component and assist participants in the design and implementation of post-fellowship projects in their home countries. The program will also support overseas travel for approximately 10-15 American hosts and program alumni to work with Community Solutions participants on community engagement projects.

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.

**Please see section B. “Federal Award Information” below for additional details.**

**A. Program Description:**

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

countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

In an increasingly connected world, the economic, environmental, political, and social challenges that confront seemingly disparate communities in fact link them together. Innovative approaches to building healthy and resilient communities have universal application when supported by collaborative and ethical leaders able and ready to adapt solutions to a local context. Making progress on complex global challenges starts locally and requires multi-sector engagement strategies. Addressing these challenges requires a new kind of global leader - one able to work across national, professional, and demographic boundaries to shape the multi-dimensional solutions needed in an increasingly complex world. Community Solutions was established with the idea that the problems that confront us, as global citizens, are shared and do not stop at national borders. It is only by working together across countries and continents that communities can tackle the most difficult challenges in today's world.

Community Solutions seeks to enhance the skills of approximately 80 civic and community leaders from over 93 countries to more effectively address current economic, environmental, political, and social challenges in their communities. Through a four- to six-month fellowship, complemented by leadership coaching and development, Community Solutions provides opportunities for eligible individuals to experience U.S. best practices in supporting healthy inclusive communities, learn effective models of civil discourse and community engagement, and develop concrete strategies to better address complex issues in their home communities. Community Solutions should be designed to enable U.S. organizations to build capacity, strengthen programs, and engage communities. Community Solutions is an investment in global peace, security, and prosperity.

As a global tool to address community-based challenges, the Community Solutions Program seeks to:

- 1) facilitate and strengthen participants' ability to lead collaboratively, address complex community challenges, and assume greater leadership roles in their institutions and communities;
- 2) enhance participants' leadership and technical skills by providing concrete tools and resources that facilitate collaborative, cross-sector leadership development, community engagement, civil discourse, effective communication, and effective project implementation and management;
- 3) cultivate professional ties and sustained linkages with U.S. citizens and American institutions in ways that expand and strengthen the ability of the people of the United States and other countries to identify solutions to common challenges facing local and global communities; and,

- 4) develop a global network of diverse, multi-disciplinary professionals and civic leaders committed to innovative problem solving and community engagement.

ECA anticipates funding one project for approximately \$2,500,000 to take place from approximately September 1, 2020 through December 31, 2022. It is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for two additional consecutive fiscal years, pending the availability of funds and successful performance, before openly competing it again.

The specific themes for the professional fellowships for this program are: Energy and Environmental Issues, Peace and Conflict Resolution, Transparency and Accountability, and Women and Gender Issues.

Eligible countries and guidance for each theme are provided in Section A.1f. Fellowship Themes and Partner Countries of this solicitation. Proposals that target professional fellowships that are unrelated to the themes and countries referenced in this Notice of Funding Opportunity will be deemed technically ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

#### **A.1. Substantial Involvement:**

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. ECA anticipates working closely with the recipient organization to ensure that all aspects of the program model support the Community Solutions Program goals. These activities and the roles and responsibilities of the Department and your organization are outlined in the attached Project, Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document.

##### ***A.1a. Participants***

For the purposes of this program, “participants” or “Community Solutions Fellows” are defined as citizens of the eligible countries selected through a merit-based, global competition to travel to the United States to take part in a Community Solutions fellowship. Special consideration can be given to individuals living in another country who have refugee status and are working on behalf of his/her home community. Participants must be early to mid-level career professionals with demonstrated leadership abilities, who are engaged in a community-based project with the express goal of addressing an economic, environmental, political, and/or social challenge confronting that community (either in or outside of their professional capacity). Participants must possess the intercultural and English language skills necessary to benefit fully from the U.S.-based fellowship and related leadership activities.

##### ***A.1b. U.S. Host Placements***

Community Solutions Fellows should work with seasoned civic leaders in the United States on pre-defined issues of mutual interest. Fellowship hosts should understand that

Community Solutions Fellows are experienced professionals in their home countries who have passed through a rigorous selection process. For Fellows to derive full benefit from the exchange program fellowship, hosts should provide substantive opportunities and real life models for the Fellows to practically apply leadership lessons, explore creative approaches to global challenges, and develop concrete strategies to implement projects or initiatives within their local communities. Hosting institutions and organizations should have expertise relevant to the participant's focus and be working on innovative community engagement projects. Preference should be given to interested host organizations that have identified potential collaborative projects or initiatives that align with Community Solutions Fellows' interests and where hosting a Community Solutions Fellow will also benefit U.S. communities. Proposals should address how technology can support participants' follow-on projects in ways that amplify and expand impact.

Proposals should maximize the number of participants and the length of the U.S.-based program at the solicited funding level. Therefore, applicant organizations who engage public and private partners for programming support, and employ other creative techniques to increase or stretch funding dollars will be deemed more competitive than those that do not, as described under the "Cost Effectiveness and Cost-Sharing" review criterion listed in this solicitation.

***A.1c. Partner Organizations***

Applicants' proposals must identify any U.S.-based and foreign-based organizations and individuals with whom they are proposing to collaborate to implement the Community Solutions Program and describe any previous cooperative activities the applicant may have had with these organizations. While having a presence in each eligible country is not required, applicants that demonstrate institutional capacity overseas and regional expertise (whether through their own resources or through partnerships with other organizations or institutions) will be deemed more competitive under the "Institutional Capacity and Track Record" criterion. In addition, proposals must demonstrate capacity in the United States to secure effective and appropriate host placements for the participants. Proposals that include letters of commitment from possible U.S.-based host organizations will be deemed more competitive under the "Institutional Capacity and Track Record" criterion listed in this solicitation.

***A.1d. Project Activities***

Community Solutions is a robust global leadership program that requires a highly tailored, nuanced approach to international programming including but not limited to an inclusive recruitment and selection process, carefully identified four- to six-month fellowship placements, a robust online platform, enhancement activities, as well as support for a global network and alumni programming. Strong program designs will ground and augment the fellowship experience with leadership development activities that relate to civic engagement. Please reference the corresponding FY 2020 Community Solutions Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document for additional details.

***A.1e Projected Timeline.***

ECA envisions the approximate dates of FY 2020 the Community Solutions Program to be as follows:

- ***September – December 2020:*** Recruitment and selection of foreign participants.
- ***January – April 2021:*** Recruitment of U.S. hosting institutions. Secure U.S.-based hosts and fellowship sites.
- ***Summer 2021:*** Community Solutions Fellows travel to the United States to attend an arrival orientation before departing for fellowship sites.
- ***Summer – Winter 2021:*** Community Solutions U.S.-based fellowship.
- ***Fall/Winter 2021:*** Community Solutions Fellows travel to Washington, D.C. for an end-of-program workshop before departing for their home countries.
- ***Winter – Summer 2022:*** Implementation of follow-on community projects, alumni activities, and collaborative programming.

***A.1f. Fellowship Themes and Partner Countries.***

Proposals for the Community Solutions Program must embrace a global program design that incorporates all four thematic areas. Proposals can include possible sub-themes or additional thematic areas of concentration provided they are well-grounded and have a strong justification for inclusion in the FY 2020 Community Solutions Program. To the fullest extent possible, program participants should be recruited and selected from all of the countries listed below. No guarantee is made or implied that every country will have participants. Proposals that target only specific countries and regions or fail to include all four themes listed in this solicitation will be deemed technically ineligible.

Note: The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program's needs and the availability of funds. In addition, the Bureau reserves the right to adjust and/or add eligible countries should conditions change in a country and/or if other countries are identified as viable alternatives and/or based on Department priorities. Eligible countries and thematic areas are as follows:

**Participating Community Solutions Countries:****Africa:**

Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

**East Asia and the Pacific:**

Burma, Brunei, Cambodia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Thailand, and Vietnam

**Europe and Eurasia:**

Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the

**Middle East and North Africa:**

Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel,

Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, and Ukraine

Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and West Bank/Palestinian Territories

**South and Central Asia:**

Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

**Western Hemisphere:**

Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay

**Community Solutions Themes:**

**Energy and Environmental Issues:**

Fellowships should focus on issues related to water and resource management, food security, supporting food supplies (at local, regional, or national levels) including locally-sourced or community-based agriculture, social entrepreneurship (leveraging science and technology to address ecological and environmental issues), low-carbon technologies, renewable energy, reducing pollution, and the use of natural resources. Fellowships may also explore creative approaches to building zero waste communities, resilient systems, educational programming, and youth engagement as they pertain to environmental sustainability.

**Peace and Conflict Resolution:**

Fellowships should expose participants to models and strategies that support peace building, dialogue, multi-culturalism, anti-discrimination, inclusion, and conflict resolution. Fellows should be provided opportunities to observe and practice innovative approaches to peace education, preventing or healing from community-based violence, inclusion of minority or marginalized populations, providing alternatives to hate speech and destructive or radical messaging, and supporting civil and human rights. Based on participants' specific interests, fellowships may need to be identified that address conflict resolution, youth engagement, preventing radicalization, and crisis response techniques in failing, failed, and post-conflict states. Fellowships may also explore how technology and social media can be utilized as tools for promoting dialogue, peace, inclusion, resolving conflicts, and preventing violence.

**Transparency and Accountability:**

Fellowships should expose participants to programs, models, and/or institutions related to civic engagement, civic education, open and transparent systems, community organizing, civil liberties and human rights, participatory democracy, good governance, anti-corruption efforts, ethics, accountability, press freedom, and/or fair elections. Fellowships may also explore the role technology and media play in supporting civil society, ensuring public accountability and transparency, and promoting human rights.

Under this theme, the important role of youth engagement, leadership, and volunteerism could also be addressed.

**Women and Gender Issues:**

Fellowships should focus on issues related to women's education, economic empowerment, health, and leadership. Under this theme, fellowships may also focus on issues related to gender and gender equality, preventing exploitation and abuse (including gender-based and domestic violence), and promoting new voices and alternatives to negative gender stereotyping. Special emphasis should be placed on identifying fellowships that will provide exposure to best practices supporting and advancing political, economic, and social empowerment of women and/or the protection of individuals marginalized because of their gender.

**B. Federal Award Information:**

**Type of Award:** Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under Substantial Involvement in the POGI.

**Fiscal Year Funds:** FY 2020

**Approximate Total Funding:** \$2,500,000.

**Approximate Number of Awards:** One

**Approximate Average Award:** \$2,500,000

**Floor of Award Range:** None

**Ceiling of Award Range:** \$2,500,000

**Anticipated Award Date:** September 1, 2020

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** December 31, 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 grant or cooperative agreement for two additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

The Department 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 cooperative agreement, in an amount (over \$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 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.

**C.3. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds:** There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing 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. 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 Linnéa E. Allison, U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges Professional Division (ECA/PE/C/PF) at (202) 632-6060 or [allisonle@state.gov](mailto:allisonle@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.

It also contains the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document, which provides specific information, award criteria and budget instructions tailored to this competition.

Please specify Program Name and 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 a current registration in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) until all program and financial activity and reporting is completed on any issued award. 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.servicenow.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](mailto: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. Adherence to All Regulations Governing the J Visa:** The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is the official program sponsor of the exchange program covered by this NOFO, and an employee of the Bureau will be the "Responsible Officer" for the program under the terms of 22 CFR 62, which covers the administration of the Exchange Visitor Program (J visa program). Under the terms of 22 CFR 62, organizations receiving awards (either a grant or cooperative agreement) under this NOFO will be third parties "cooperating with or assisting the sponsor in the conduct of the sponsor's program." The actions of recipient organizations shall be "imputed to the sponsor in evaluating the sponsor's compliance with" 22 CFR 62. Therefore, the Bureau expects that any organization receiving an award under this competition will render all assistance necessary to enable the Bureau to fully comply with 22 CFR 62 et seq.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the secure and proper administration of Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by recipient organizations and program participants to all regulations governing the J visa program status. Therefore, proposals should explicitly state in writing that the applicant is prepared to assist the Bureau in meeting all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62. If your organization has experience as a designated Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor, the applicant should discuss their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et. seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The recipient organization will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

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

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division  
U.S. Department of State  
SA-4E (Bldg. 3)  
2430 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

**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. 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.3k. 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.3l. 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. The budget format listed in the PSI is provided as an aid in organizing the budget, it is suggested but not required as a submission format for your proposal budget.

**D.3m. 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.3o. Allowable costs**

Allowable costs for the program are included in the corresponding Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

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

Application Deadline Date: May 8, 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.3q. 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](mailto:support@grants.gov)

**Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission**

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

**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.3r. 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. Quality of Program Idea and Ability to Achieve Objectives:** The proposal should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Program objectives should be stated clearly and should reflect regional expertise as well as capacity in leadership development and the Community Solutions' four thematic areas: Energy and Environmental Issues, Peace and Conflict Resolution, Transparency and Accountability, and Women and Gender Issues. Objectives should respond to the topics in this solicitation and should relate to the current conditions in the target country/countries. Timelines should be comprehensive in nature and include deadlines

for completion of all major tasks and activities. The substance of professional workshops, U.S.-based Fellowships, leadership development activities, and follow-on and alumni programming should be described in detail. The proposal should explain how these elements will be integrated into and support the program objectives.

Responsibilities of proposed partners including contractors, trainers, coaches, and regional/in-country partners should be clearly described. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program's goals.

**2. Cost Effectiveness and Cost Sharing:** Overhead and administrative costs in the proposal budget, including salaries, honoraria and subcontracts for services should be reasonable, while ensuring proper support for program activities. Applicant organizations are strongly encouraged to cost share a portion of overhead and administrative expenses and/or find innovative ways to off-set costs. Cost-sharing and in-kind contributions, including contributions from the applicant organization, proposed in-country partner(s), and other sources should be included in the budget or budget notes. Please address how the program will utilize innovative tools, low-carbon technologies, and socially responsible approaches to program implementation, including web-based and other technologies, to reduce the program's carbon footprint and be a faithful steward of federal resources.

**3. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Achievable and relevant features should be cited in both program administration (selection of participants, program venue, program evaluation, etc.) and program content (orientation, wrap-up sessions, program meetings, resource materials, follow-up activities, etc.). Diversity, in its broadest sense, should be used as a platform for learning and advancing stated program goals and objectives. Please refer to the Bureau's Diversity, Freedom, and Democracy Guidelines in the PSI.

**4. Multiplier Effect/Follow-on Activities:** The proposed program should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and the establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages. Emphasis should be placed on how the proposed program will cultivate and provide support for a global network of civic leaders actively working to develop community interventions and solutions that positively impact communities in the United States and around the globe.

**5. Project Evaluation:** The proposal should include a detailed plan to evaluate the program, both as activities unfold and at the end of the program. Special emphasis should be placed on evaluating the effectiveness of the program's leadership development training as it relates to the program's stated goals and objectives. Program objectives should target clearly defined results in quantitative terms. Competitive evaluation plans will describe how results are measured, including the evaluative methodology and tools to be utilized. Proposals may include draft data collection instruments (surveys, questionnaires, etc.) and if relevant, sample data sets from exchange programs referenced in the proposal.

**6. Institutional Capacity and Track Record:** The proposal should demonstrate an institutional record of successful management of complex global exchange programs, including the development of leadership modules, online platforms, knowledge management systems, network building, and alumni programming. Proposals should also demonstrate a stated track record of responsible fiscal management and 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.

## **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](http://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. Region and Topic Specific requirements:** The following additional requirements apply to this project:

**F.3a. Palestinian Authority, West Bank, and Gaza Programming:** All awards made under this competition must be executed according to all relevant U.S. laws and policies regarding assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and to the West Bank and Gaza.

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

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact Linnéa Allison, 202-632-6060, AllisonLE@state.gov for additional information.

**F.4. 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](mailto: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](mailto:FFATAECA@state.gov). This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's [USAspending.gov](http://USAspending.gov) website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

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

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

**F.5. 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, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel such as host organizations and U.S. mentors.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for all in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least four weeks prior to the official opening of the activity.

Please see the Community Solutions POGI for additional information on required data.

### **G. Agency Contacts**

For question about this announcement, contact Linnéa E. Allison, U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges Professional Division (ECA/PE/C/PF) at (202) 632-6060 or [allisonle@state.gov](mailto:allisonle@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

March 9, 2020