PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

FY 2020 U.S. South Pacific Scholarship Program and
FY 2020 U.S. Timor-Leste Scholarship Program

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0006674

Office of Academic Exchange Programs
East Asia and Pacific Programs Branch

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued by the Office of Academic Exchange Programs, East Asia and Pacific Programs Branch (ECA/A/E/EAP), for the FY 2020 U.S. South Pacific Scholarship Program (USSP) and the FY 2020 U.S. Timor-Leste Scholarship Program (USTL). Proposals must conform to the NOFO, the Guidelines stated in this document, and the standard Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Applications not adhering to the conditions set forth herein may be deemed technically ineligible. These guidelines are specific to the program mentioned above and are IN ADDITION TO the Standard Guidelines outlined in the PSI. If there is a perceived disparity between the standard and program specific Guidelines and the program information supplied in the accompanying NOFO, the NOFO is to be the dominant reference.

I. STATEMENT OF WORK

In a cooperative agreement, ECA/A/E/EAP is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. Responsibilities of the award recipient for the administration of the FY 2020 U.S. South Pacific Scholarship Program and the FY 2020 U.S. Timor-Leste Scholarship Program include:

1. Support U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS) outreach and publicity efforts by announcing and publicizing the annual scholarship competition broadly;
2. Distribute application and informational materials about the scholarship programs to embassy Public Affairs Sections, which will take the lead on recruitment and nomination;
3. Field inquiries from prospective candidates;
4. Convene review panels, including at least one country/regional expert for final academic review and assessment of U.S. university admissibility;
5. Review candidate applications to determine competitiveness and suitability for program; review academic credentials for completeness and relevance to proposed field of study;
6. Place the participants at appropriate U.S. institutions for academic degree study leading to a bachelor’s or master’s degree in one of the pre-approved fields of study listed in the solicitation;
7. Arrange round-trip travel for the participants from their home cities to their U.S. host institutions;
8. Ensure that participants receive pre-departure and arrival orientations;
9. Enroll participants in the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) Health Benefit Plan, in order to comply with J-1 visa requirements and assist with claims as necessary;
10. Develop and facilitate innovative cultural enrichment activities;
11. Assist participants in arranging optional local, U.S.-based summer internships, as applicable, including virtual opportunities;
12. Monitor participants’ adjustment and academic performance;
13. Ensure participant health, safety and well-being;
14. In close consultation with ECA, evaluate the program and its impact on the participants during their stay in the United States and after they return to their home countries, developing follow-on activities to facilitate long-term linkages and relationships;
15. Manage all financial aspects of the program (e.g., participant stipends, housing allowances, host university agreements, activity costs);
16. Report programmatic, financial and statistical information to ECA;
17. Manage and monitor all aspects of the participants’ J-1 visa status, including the issuance of DS-2019 forms;
18. Respond fully and promptly to requests for information from ECA or U.S. Embassies relating to the participants and alumni.

U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Sections’ responsibilities include:

1. Announce and publicize annual scholarship competition(s) broadly;
2. Distribute scholarship application materials;
3. Advise prospective participants and/or direct inquiries to the award recipient;
4. Assist with screening applications through secure electronic access provided by the award recipient for minimum eligibility and required documentation;
5. Notify principal and alternate student candidates after the award recipient confirms final application status in consultation with ECA;
6. Coordinate pre-departure and alumni activities as appropriate.

ECA’s responsibilities for this program include:

1. Participate in the design and direction of program activities;
2. Approve key personnel;
3. Approve and provide input on program timelines and agendas;
4. Offer guidance in execution of all program components;
5. Review and approve all program publicity and recruitment materials;
6. Participate in student interviews and selection panels when feasible;
7. Review and approve selection decisions prior to offer of award;
8. Approve academic placement assignments;
9. Approve changes to students’ proposed academic field or institution;
10. Approve decisions related to special circumstances or problems throughout duration of program;
11. Assist with SEVIS-related issues;
12. Assist with participant emergencies;
13. Serve as primary liaison with PAS and country desk officers at the U.S. State Department.

II. PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

Program administration activities should cover the time period of approximately August 1, 2020 through July 31, 2025. It is expected that funding will annually support approximately three (3) students in the USSP program and approximately three (3) students in the USTL program for up to four years of academic study plus pre-academic English language instruction or a preparatory bridging semester/year as needed. This federal assistance award will cover the entire program in the U.S. for the candidates selected. Students must return home following the completion of their ECA-funded programs.

For both programs, administrative responsibilities include the following broad categories: program planning and management; recruitment and selection support; placement; orientation; participant supervision and support services; fiscal management and budgeting; and program reporting and evaluation. The proposal should include yearly budget projections for the full duration of the award. Programs must comply with J-1 Exchange Visitor Program regulations.

Participants

The U.S. South Pacific Scholarship Program and the U.S. Timor-Leste Scholarship Program emphasize the selection of young men and women with leadership experience or potential who will have a positive impact on their country’s future development. The Bureau seeks scholarship participants who represent all aspects of their home country’s diversity. Individuals living in the United States are not eligible and preference is given to those without significant U.S. or third-country undergraduate study experience.

Timorese applicants should have functional English skills but often require pre-academic English training in the United States prior to beginning their undergraduate study. South Pacific applicants will not need pre-academic English training, but at the master’s level may benefit from up to one year of preparatory study, known as a bridging semester or year, if they possess the three-year baccalaureate degree commonly offered in the Pacific Islands region.
Recruitment

The award recipient(s) should maintain separate identities for the U.S. South Pacific Scholarship Program and the U.S. Timor-Leste Scholarship Program and must ensure that the U.S. Department of State is prominently identified as the program sponsor in all publicity and other scholarship program materials. The key conditions, benefits, and terms of the program -- what is and what is not covered under the award, as well as the two-year home-residence requirement -- should be described in the application materials. The description of study opportunities should include essential information for prospective participants who are unfamiliar with the U.S. educational system. In addition to recruiting candidates for full associate’s, bachelor’s and master’s degree programs, the award recipient may recruit and fund candidates with prior undergraduate study for the final two to three years of a bachelor’s degree.

Selection

U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Sections in Dili, Suva, Port Moresby, Apia, and Wellington will assist with initial screening for minimum eligibility. The award recipient(s) will convene panels for final academic review, including at least one country/regional expert to provide country expertise, and will present a final slate of principal and alternate candidates to ECA for approval. Review panels taking place in the region will include one U.S. Mission representative. Embassy Public Affairs Sections will notify primary and alternate candidates after the award recipient confirms the final application status in consultation with ECA. Materials, communications, and selection methodology should prominently reinforce the expectation that students will be active alumni and leaders in their home communities following the conclusion of the program.

Pre-academic and English Language Training

For the U.S. Timor-Leste Program, the proposal must describe plans for pre-academic preparation and English language training, and for administering TOEFL/IELTS or other placement tests as required by U.S. host institutions. It is assumed that most USTL participants will need up to one year of English language instruction in the United States. Several levels of intensive English-language courses, from beginning to advanced, should be made available. The Bureau recommends that applicants be tested as part of the screening process using a locally available test instrument, and then given the TOEFL upon arrival in the United States to determine which level of English-language course is appropriate. Students who need additional instruction beyond the first year will be required to take the instruction at their placement universities.
Placement

The award recipient will work with those participants who have prior undergraduate study to obtain transcripts from their home institutions and ensure that they receive maximum academic credit. The award recipient should arrange academic placement of the students at appropriate U.S. institutions. The award recipient will work to obtain financial aid, scholarships, tuition awards, in-state tuition, etc., and explain the nature of, and funding for, the program to U.S. academic host institutions. Students may be clustered together or receive separate placements. The proposal should describe how students will be identified as participants of the U.S. South Pacific and/or U.S. Timor-Leste Scholarship Program on their host campuses.

Orientation Programs

The U.S. Embassy will arrange pre-departure orientations, as appropriate, in close coordination with the award recipient. The proposal should include complete and detailed sample pre-departure orientation information that the award recipient will provide to students and the embassy Public Affairs Sections. Key points concerning academic requirements and coursework, housing, U.S. campus life, what to pack, finances, health and safety, policies on J-2 dependents, and other critical issues should be included in the material. The award recipient should design the material to serve as a useful post-arrival reference as well, supplemented with additional information.

The award recipient should ensure that upon arrival all participants receive an orientation that will expand upon the topics mentioned above, as well as introduce them specifically to the host institution and community.

Internships (Optional)

Applicants may propose a U.S. internship experience for students, either physical or virtual, with or without academic credit. The goal of this program is to provide students with a paid or unpaid practical internship of approximately four to six weeks over a summer during their scholarship program, authorized under the Academic Training section of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program regulations.

Internships must directly relate to the participants' major field of study and the students must be in good academic standing. ECA’s intention for this component is to provide students with internships and not summer jobs. The applicant should estimate internship costs, such as public transportation, within the proposed budget and should guide students in their search and be responsible for approving internship placements, granting academic training in advance, arranging for academic credit, if applicable, monitoring students
during their internships, and conducting an overall evaluation of the internship component of the program.

**Program Activities**

The proposal should describe innovative plans for orientations, goals, and approaches for the academic portion of the program, including any special academic enrichment activities, cultural and community projects, evaluation and follow-up, and alumni tracking. Proposed activities might include volunteer work, student presentations to the local community, and matching of students with Americans, such as a local host family. The proposal must demonstrate that the recipient organization(s) can provide effective support systems (such as tutoring, counseling, host family, mentor or buddy system, consultation with student adviser) to the students during the program. The applicant should assign an adviser or coordinator who can serve as a central resource to students regarding their scholarship, the J-1 visa program, and cross-cultural adjustment. The adviser also serves as a link between the students and ECA.

To support the Bureau’s goal of promoting mutual understanding, opportunities for academic and enrichment experiences related to U.S. institutions, society, and culture are essential. ECA expects students to study in the United States throughout the term of the program, and not to travel to third countries for study there, even with other sources of funding. ECA welcomes creative ideas for exposing students to, and increasing their understanding of, key elements of American civil society, such as discussion groups on community issues, visits to political campaign offices and polling places, attendance at school board or city council meetings, and civic-related volunteer work. Student attendance at museums, concerts, plays, and other cultural or community events should be encouraged and facilitated whenever possible.

As a way to enrich the campus experience and ensure greater interaction with American peers, students may be eligible for part-time campus employment not to exceed ten hours per week with ECA approval. Prior to eligibility, students must successfully complete one academic semester with at least a 3.0 grade point average.

**Participant Monitoring and Evaluation**

The proposal should discuss how the award recipient will monitor participants' progress in achieving program goals and objectives at their U.S. host institutions (e.g. surveys, interviews, work plans). The proposal should describe the frequency of communication with the participants and with representatives of the U.S. host institutions, and outline performance goals or benchmarks for each semester in the United States. The proposal should also discuss the methods for gauging the quality of program activities, tracking each participant’s success, and monitoring and resolving any problems that arise. Program staff working with the participants should demonstrate strong interpersonal and
communication skills, sensitivity, and a flexible approach that is responsive to each student and his or her circumstances. Senior management should ensure appropriate oversight.

**Participant Responsibilities**

In accordance with J-1 regulations, ECA expects participants to maintain the equivalent of a full course of study. They should also maintain at least a "B" average, and must comply with the academic and other requirements of the program and host institution. USSP and USTL participants are subject to the 212(e) two-year home residency requirement and must return immediately to their home countries upon completion of the academic program. ECA may remove students from the program for academic failure, behavioral misconduct, or inability to fulfill the terms of the program. The award recipient will make the final decision to remove a student after it consults with and receives written approval from ECA. Each student shall be required to read and sign a grant Terms and Conditions document.

**Alumni Tracking and Follow-On Activities**

Alumni activities are an important part of ECA's academic exchange programs. The applicant should indicate how they will facilitate and promote participant and alumni use of the U.S. Department of State’s International Exchange Alumni website (www.alumni.state.gov). Alumni programming in the form of seminars, newsletters, and social media platforms provides critical program follow-on and serves to maximize and extend the benefit of the participants' program in the United States. ECA strongly urges the applicant to outline how it will creatively organize and financially support alumni activities at a minimal cost to ECA, and how its efforts will be coordinated with ECA and embassy Public Affairs Sections.

Alumni tracking is critical for measuring the longer-term impact of the program and for the implementation of worthwhile follow-on activities. The proposal should describe how the award recipient will maintain long-term linkages with alumni and should detail how the award recipient will update alumni records beyond the duration of the award. The award recipient should transfer all statistical information on participants and alumni to the ECA alumni database annually. Therefore, the award recipient is responsible for ensuring that its system for collecting, storing, and transferring participant data is compatible with ECA’s system. Additionally, the award recipient should share noteworthy alumni activities and accomplishments with ECA regularly.

**Visa and Tax Requirements**

The award recipient must sponsor all participants under an Exchange Visitor Program on a J-1 visa. ECA will designate a representative from the recipient organization as an Alternate Responsible Officer, who will be responsible for processing DS-2019 forms and
ensuring that all needed documentation reaches the relevant overseas U.S. consular offices. In addition, administration of these full scholarships must comply with reporting and withholding regulations for federal, state, and local taxes as applicable.

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Applicants should submit a complete and thorough proposal describing the program in a convincing and comprehensive manner. Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

Proposals should address succinctly, but completely, the elements described below and must follow all format requirements.

NOTE: Proposals submitted through Grants.gov may only be submitted in the following formats:
- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)
  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.
- ASCII Text
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images)

Proposals should include the following items. All documents should be appropriately and clearly titled.

Online Forms
- SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance”
- SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs
- SF-424B, “Assurances-Non-Construction Programs” (only required for organizations if its representations and certifications have not been completed in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). If an organization is exempt from registering in SAM.gov, then it would still need to provide the form as part of its application.)
- Include other attachments, if applicable, such as the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), form 990 Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax, SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only required for organizations that engage in lobbying activities), etc.
Program Narrative

Executive Summary (One page)
In one double-spaced page, provide the following information about the project:

1. Name of organization/participating institutions
2. Beginning and ending dates of the program
3. Proposed theme
4. Nature of activity
5. Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources
6. Scope and Goals
7. Number and description of participants
8. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
9. Geographic diversity of program, both U.S. and overseas
10. Fields covered
11. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

Narrative

In 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below.

1. Vision (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits)
2. Participating Organizations
3. Program Activities (advertisement, recruitment, orientation, academic component, cultural program, participant monitoring)
4. Program Evaluation
5. Follow-on
6. Project Management
7. Work Plan/Time Frame

Additional Information to be Submitted:

- Detailed Budget
- Calendar of activities/itinerary
- Letters of endorsement
- Resumes and CVs (resumes of all new staff should be included in the submission; no
Detailed Budget: The proposal must include a comprehensive line-item budget, the details and format of which are contained in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). In addition, the proposal must include a comprehensive budget narrative demonstrating how the applicant derived costs, as well as a year-by-year breakdown of expenses. The budget should start with a summary page that breaks out the program and administrative costs for one or both of the regional programs (South Pacific and/or Timor-Leste). **The total amount of funding requested from ECA may not exceed $700,000 to administer two programs or $350,000 to administer one.** The proposal should clearly state the number of participants that the organization proposes to sponsor. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase the proposed budget in accordance with funding availability and the needs of the program.

As with other exchange programs, ECA is committed to the containment of costs consistent with overall program objectives and sound management. The program budget narrative should cite areas in which the applicant can achieve economies, short of the full, allowable cost, and should document the proposed cost sharing in the most concrete way possible. Administrative and program costs must be cost-shared to the greatest extent feasible. The applicant must keep administrative costs to a minimum.

The award recipient may enroll participants in the ECA-funded Accident and Sickness Policy for Exchanges (ASPE) or another policy comparable in terms of cost and coverage. Should the applicant organization choose to propose a comparable policy, the applicant must provide detailed information on the policy and the cost per student per year should be included in the budget. Please see the Insurance section of the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for more information.

**APPLICATION SUBMISSION**

The NOFO indicates the date the complete proposal is due and the manner in which proposals must be submitted. **There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this deadline.** For further information regarding this program or the competition, call Anita Chan at (202) 632-3212, ECA/A/E/EAP; email: ChanAX@state.gov.