Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity
(NOFO): FY2021 Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation Alumni Exchange
Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0007931
Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.451
Key Date/Application Deadline: June 4, 2021

Executive Summary: The Cultural Heritage Center (ECA/P/C) in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) invites submission of proposals from U.S. public and private nonprofit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) for a Cooperative Agreement to assist in the design and implementation of the FY 2021 Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation Alumni Exchange (AFCP-AE).

This initiative is one of three that the Center will launch in 2021 to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP). Since its inception 20 years ago, the AFCP has supported over a thousand projects in more than 650 communities in 133 countries around the world. See here for more information: https://eca.state.gov/cultural-heritage-center/ambassadors-fund-cultural-preservation/annual-reports.

Two of the three initiatives celebrating the AFCP will be implemented via cooperative agreements. They are: the AFCP-AE (the subject of this NOFO) and the Cultural Heritage Exchange Initiative. A NOFO has been issued for each. Applicants may apply to either one or both as they prefer.

The AFCP-AE will strengthen connections between American cultural preservation experts and the vast network of cultural heritage preservation professionals from around the world who have participated in one or several of the preservation projects funded through AFCP since 2001. It shall consist of a series of six regional workshops and one virtual global workshop focused on issues likely to face the cultural heritage preservation community over the next decade and the sharing of best practices to deal with the expected challenges. Foreign participants will include individuals from organizations that have implemented AFCP projects over the last 20 years who will be selected to represent a range of heritage types and contexts.

The anticipated key outcomes are the identification of shared values with respect to the preservation of cultural heritage, the establishment of a global AFCP network of cultural preservation professionals who have a positive view of the United States, and the promotion of U.S. leadership in international cultural preservation. The anticipated key outputs are career development and professional networking opportunities for U.S. and foreign preservation professionals, institutions, and organizations.

The overarching goals for the AFCP-AE are:

- To provide a platform for AFCP alumni to connect and learn from each other
- To promote best practices in cultural preservation and protection
- To provide professional development opportunities to AFCP alumni

Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

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

A.1. Program Design: The AFCP-AE will support the development of workshops to provide AFCP alumni networking, skill-building, and other professional development opportunities. Program development and planning, carried out in cooperation with ECA/P/C and U.S. embassies, should begin in winter 2021 with implementation beginning in spring 2022.

The AFCP-AE will consist of three components outlined below. An approximate cost for each component is included. Applicants should use these as a guide and may adjust the total amount per component in their proposals. The total award however shall not exceed $250,000.

1. **Global Alumni Workshop (approximately $25,000)** -- In its 20 years of operation, the AFCP has supported the preservation of a wide range of heritage, from iconic monuments to museum collections and cultural traditions. AFCP awards grants to museums, ministries of culture, NGOs, and other organizations that preserve cultural heritage. Implementing organizations that design and execute AFCP projects become valuable partners for U.S. embassies in engaging communities around their cultural heritage. A global alumni workshop in which implementing organizations of AFCP projects can meet fellow preservation professionals and learn about current preservation practices will provide will provide a welcome recognition to these important partners. The virtual Global Alumni Workshop will also allow AFCP

program and embassy staff to organize a professional network of implementers of future projects.

The virtual Global Alumni Workshop will take place over three days in the winter of 2021/2022. It should aim to include at least one participant from 75 of the 133 countries that have hosted AFCP projects, and there should be at least two countries represented from each of the six State Department geographic regions. The Workshop will include thematic sessions to address topics of global concern, such as heritage and climate; heritage and development; keeping heritage alive; and engaging youth in heritage. Every workshop will provide multiple exchange and training opportunities through expert speaker and panel discussions with U.S. and foreign heritage professionals.

In conjunction with the Global Alumni Workshop, a toolkit will be developed for embassies to assist them in hosting local events around the global workshop. The toolkit will include lists of potential speakers and activities to celebrate the 20th anniversary of AFCP and highlight the contribution of local professionals to global cultural preservation.

2. **Regional Alumni Workshops (approximately $200,000)** -- Similar to the Global Alumni Workshop, these regional workshops will allow AFCP alumni to share technical and logistical expertise and to celebrate the contributions of AFCP projects to regional diplomacy efforts and the promotion of U.S. values. Six regional workshops should be held – one for each of the Department's six geographical regions. Two may be held virtually. Four should held in person in the regions covered. The workshops should aim to include representatives from a minimum of 10 implementing organizations of AFCP projects when held in person and 20 when held virtually. The workshop should be held starting in the summer of 2022 after the virtual Global Alumni Workshop.

3. **Ongoing Alumni Engagement Events (approximately $25,000)** --In addition to regional events, four short, virtual global engagement events will be held in starting in 2023. These 2 hours events will be open to the entire AFCP Alumni network and will consist of both a presentation by one or more experts on a topic of broad interest to the preservation community and an opportunity to network and discuss AFCP project updates with the community. The events should be able to accommodate a minimum of 50 participants.

A2. Substantial Involvement: In a cooperative agreement, the U.S. Department of State is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. Specifically, ECA/P/C will be involved in the following:

- In consultation with U.S. embassies and the recipient, the ECA/P/C will approve the final selection of the workshop agendas and speakers

- ECA/P/C will facilitate: collaboration between the recipient and organizations that have received AFCP grants; and collaborations with other programs runs by ECA.

More broadly and generally, the ECA/P/C will also reserve the right to:

- participate in the design, implementation, and direction of the program;
- approve key personnel;
- providing input on and approve program design, timelines, and administrative procedures;
- provide guidance in the execution of program components;
- review and approving program publicity and other materials, including social media, as applicable.

A3. Recipient Responsibilities

The recipient will be responsible for the design, development, administration, and implementation of the FY 2021 AFCP-AE, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Designing, organization and delivering all workshops, trainings, exchanges and events included in the AFCP-AE, to include designing content, curriculum, and publicity, identifying and arranging the participation of U.S. partners and subject matter experts, and funding and organizing travel as may be needed. It is understood and expected that due to COVID-19 and travel restrictions, most workshops, trainings, and events will be virtual initially; but as restriction are eased in-person events will be held.
- Developing the event toolkit for U.S. embassies, including designing activities for communities and local implementers, developing a list of potential U.S. or regional speakers, and suggested social media engagement activities.
- Gathering and maintaining participant data, anecdotes, and other details for reference and reporting to ECA.

B. Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA/P/C's level of involvement in this program is listed under A2. Substantial Involvement under A. Program Description.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY2021

Approximate Total Funding: $250,000, pending the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Approximate Average Award: $250,000, pending the availability of funds.

Floor of Award Range: None

Ceiling of Award Range: $250,000, pending the availability of funds.

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

Anticipated Project Completion Date: December 31, 2023

The Department reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets and the three core exchange programs 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 D3a and D3c 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 of $250,000 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 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:

> 1. Applicants must address all three of the components outlined in section A, namely the: 1.) Global Alumni Workshop, 2.) the Regional Alumni Workshops, and 3.) Ongoing Alumni Engagement Events.

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 the Cultural Heritage Center, ECA/P/C, SA-5, 5th floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, culturalproperty@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. Please specify FY2021 AFCP Alumni Exchange and refer to the Funding

Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all 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 a current registration 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 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. 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.

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

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) Personnel
2) Fringe Benefits
3) Travel, including Per Diem, and visa fees
4) Supplies

5) Contractual
6) Other Direct Costs
7) Indirect Costs

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 throughGrants.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. <u>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.</u>

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

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

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

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

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "Applicant FAQs" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov. Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software

compatibility. You can verify if your version of Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

D.3p. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E.   APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

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

E.1.   REVIEW CRITERIA

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

1. Program planning and ability to achieve program objectives: Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. 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.

2. 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.

3. Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability: Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals.

4. 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.

5. Project Evaluation: Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports.

F.   Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Award Notices: Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated, and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer 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 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.3h. 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: Erin Leckey, U.S. Department of State, Cultural Heritage Center, ECA/P/C*,* SA-5*, 5th* floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, LeckeyEH@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   March 29, 2021
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State