

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY2021 Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students (IDEAS) Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0007471

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.009

Key Date/Application Deadline: March 5, 2021

Executive Summary: The U.S. Study Abroad Branch (ECA/A/S/Q) within the Office of Global Educational Programs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, is pleased to announce an open competition for proposals to administer the FY2021 Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students (IDEAS) Program, formerly known as the Capacity Building Program for U.S. Study Abroad. The IDEAS Program advances the Bureau's objective of supporting mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by building the institutional capacity of accredited U.S. higher education institutions to increase and/or diversify U.S. student mobility abroad in support of U.S. foreign policy goals. For the purposes of this award, diversification of study abroad programming includes but is not limited to:

- Expanding study abroad to new overseas destinations, particularly those that are less common study abroad destinations;
- Increasing the number of study abroad students from groups that are currently underrepresented in study abroad, which may include but are not limited to first-generation students, racial/ethnic minority students, students with disabilities, and/or students from underrepresented academic disciplines; and
- Increasing the number of U.S. higher education institutions offering study abroad programs, including but not limited to community colleges, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), and institutions in states with traditionally lower study abroad numbers.

The FY2021 IDEAS Program aims to increase and diversify study abroad through two main components, the administration of small grants and the implementation of capacity building initiatives. Pending availability of funds, the recipient will work in close consultation with ECA to implement these two components under this award:

1. **Administration of Small Grants to Support Capacity Building:** The award recipient will execute one national competition for the provision of no fewer than 20 total sub-awards of \$35,000 or less to accredited U.S. higher education institutions to create, expand, and/or diversify their study abroad programs in support of U.S. foreign policy goals. Sub-awards should support programs for primarily undergraduate students. Selection criteria for sub-awards should fully reflect the overall goals and criteria for the small grants as stated in Section A of

this NOFO. The award recipient will provide programmatic support and guidance to sub-award applicants and recipients and monitor the fiscal and programmatic progress of the recipients and their projects, as well as the final impact of the awards. The award recipient will provide semi-annual reports on results to ECA. Additionally, the recipient is required to alert the Program Office of any impediments to successful implementation as they arise and consult with ECA to resolve programmatic and/or financial challenges. The recipient must provide an evaluation of activities as outlined below.

2. **Implementation of Other Capacity Building Initiatives:** The award recipient will design and implement initiatives for the wider U.S. study abroad community to increase and diversify U.S. student mobility abroad. These initiatives may take the form of in-person and/or virtual workshops, seminars, trainings and/or other creative mechanisms to bolster the capacity and knowledge sharing of and by U.S. higher education staff and faculty to expand American student mobility overseas. Applicants should propose at least six total virtual and/or in-person capacity building activities, which can be of various formats and lengths, for the wider higher education community. For any in-person activities, proposals should include relevant funding to enable broad and diverse participation of U.S. higher education representatives, including those requiring financial support to participate. Applicants proposing in-person activities should provide justification for in-person meeting costs and rationale for why meeting in-person is necessary to the activities' success. Proposals for this element should not exceed \$150,000 in total.

ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase the number of small grant competitions and the number and format of capacity building initiatives in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

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.

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.

Interested organizations should read the NOFO for all information prior to preparing proposals. Please refer to the solicitation package including this NOFO and the Proposed Submission Instructions (PSI) for further instructions.

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. Purpose

The IDEAS Program is designed to increase and diversify American student mobility in support of U.S. foreign policy goals. It is imperative that our next generation of leaders — American students of all backgrounds — engage internationally to foster mutual understanding and develop global skills in fields that are key to supporting U.S. national security and economic prosperity. Through the provision of small grants and virtual and/or in-person capacity building initiatives, the IDEAS Program supports U.S. higher education institutions to create and expand study abroad programming that will best prepare their students with the global skills needed in their communities, as well as in the United States at large. The program directly benefits U.S. communities by preparing American students of all backgrounds with cultural competencies, foreign language skills, personal and/or professional networks in other countries, and academic and/or professional knowledge that prepare them for successful careers. The program also directly advances mutual understanding between the United States and other countries by building institutional capacity to send more American students to more destinations, where they serve as citizen ambassadors by sharing U.S. culture and values with their peers.

A.2. Expected Program Outcomes

The program outcomes are outlined below.

1. Accredited U.S. higher education institutions will:
 - a. Create or expand their capacity to administer study abroad programs that are primarily for U.S. undergraduate students and align with U.S. foreign policy goals; and
 - b. Increase the number of U.S. undergraduate students studying or interning abroad for academic credit, with an emphasis on diversifying both the

students and institutions taking part in study abroad and the destinations to which they travel.

2. Collect, develop, and share best practices for increasing and diversifying study abroad opportunities for U.S. students with the broader U.S. higher education community through trainings and other capacity building initiatives.

A.3. Administration of Small Grants to Support Capacity Building

ECA anticipates that the award recipient will conduct one national open competition for no fewer than 20 accredited U.S. higher education institutions to receive small grants of up to \$35,000 for the creation, expansion, and/or diversification of U.S. study abroad programming.

The award recipient should use the following minimum criteria to recruit and screen applicants:

1. Applicants must be accredited U.S. higher education institutions.
2. Proposals must primarily support U.S. undergraduate student mobility abroad. Along with supporting the creation or expansion of study abroad programs, the grant competition should also support creative ideas for how to build study abroad capacity on campus, for example through the development of study abroad outreach and student support resources.
3. Funding may not be used to support direct student costs, which include but are not limited to scholarships, tuition, international travel, and meals.
4. Proposals can only support U.S. study abroad programming in foreign locations that meet criteria approved by ECA. ECA will confer with the award recipient prior to the launch of the small grant competition to determine these criteria.

The award recipient should oversee selection panels made of U.S. higher education representatives, including but not limited to study abroad staff, who will rank and recommend proposals for funding. At a minimum, successful sub-award applications should demonstrate the following:

1. A clear, well-articulated plan to build institutional capacity to increase and/or diversify the number of U.S. undergraduate (primarily) students who study abroad and/or the destinations where they study.
2. A clear description of how the proposed plan directly addresses one or more identified U.S. foreign policy goals, a list of which will be provided by ECA.
3. A clear description of how, as a direct result of the sub-award, the applicant will in the near term increase the number of undergraduate students that study and/or in intern abroad for academic credit and/or the destinations where they study.
4. A plan for the sustainability of the proposed program after federal funding ends.
5. A demonstrated commitment to participating in capacity building activities and active engagement in community networks.

6. A connection to the institution's U.S. student mobility abroad and/or campus internationalization goals, if relevant.

ECA reserves the right to provide additional eligibility and selection criteria or to modify these requirements, as needed.

A.4 Implementation of Other Capacity Building Initiatives

The award recipient will implement capacity building initiatives for the wider U.S. study abroad community to increase and diversify U.S. student mobility. Applicants should propose a plan that includes: hosting virtual and/or in-person topical seminars relevant to increasing and diversifying American student mobility; spotlighting and sharing best practices from sub-award recipients; and other creative virtual engagements, resources, or networks to build connections and increase study abroad capacity within U.S. higher education institutions. Applicants should propose at least six virtual and/or in-person activities, which can be of various formats and lengths.

The topics of the seminars, virtual engagements, and other capacity building initiatives will be developed in consultation with ECA. Initiatives may cover, but are not limited to, topics such as developing international partnerships; expanding programming to diverse destinations; supporting underserved U.S. undergraduate students; building study abroad capacity at community colleges, MSIs, or other targeted institution types; international internships and other career-readiness models related to study abroad; health, safety, and risk management; and curriculum integration.

To the extent possible, the award recipient should engage U.S. higher education institutions with the relevant subject matter expertise and experience in the execution of these program activities. The process for identifying hosts may include, but is not limited to, conducting an open competition to identify interested and qualified host campuses to execute the activities. Recipients may also propose to engage directly with specific higher education institutions or industry organizations that are clear leaders in the field on specific topic areas, in consultation with ECA.

Applicants proposing in-person activities should include all logistical costs for program activities in their budgets, including but not limited to meals, space rentals, speakers, and travel grants to facilitate attendance by representatives from low-resource institutions. Applications proposing in-person activities should provide justification for these costs and why meeting in-person is necessary to the activities' success.

Proposals for this element should not exceed \$150,000 in total.

A.5. Award Recipient Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the award recipient for the FY2021 IDEAS Program include the following:

1. **Program planning and management.** Develop a detailed program plan and timeline of key activities to administer the program for approval by ECA. Provide an overall staffing plan, including level of effort for each position, sufficient to carry out program activities. Conduct regular meetings in-person or virtually with ECA Program Officer and key personnel. Provide ECA with minutes of these meetings, including action items and key deadlines.
2. **Administration of small grants competition.** Develop and implement a solicitation, application, screening, and merit-based review process for a national small grants competition. Submit the recommended institutions and alternates to ECA for approval before notifying applicants. The applicant should propose strategies for supporting institutions with less experience in applying for grants.
3. **Management and support of sub-awards.** Manage all sub-awards, both programmatically and financially, including monitoring, advising, and supporting sub-award recipients as they implement their projects. Check in virtually or in-person with sub-award recipients and provide ECA with a summary of any notable recipient activities monthly. Develop a mentoring plan and connect sub-award recipients with mentor institution who can provide advice and guidance as they work to increase and diversify their study abroad programming. Applicants are also encouraged to outline innovative methods for virtually connecting selected institutions to build a peer support network.
4. **Administration of capacity building initiatives.** Identify hosts, design, plan, and implement virtual and/or in-person capacity building initiatives that focus on increasing and diversifying U.S. student mobility abroad. Develop, collate, and share resources from capacity building initiatives with the wider U.S. study abroad community through the program website.
5. **Outreach and publicity.** Develop and implement an outreach and communications plan that generates a strong pool of diverse, eligible U.S. higher education institutions to participate in program activities and communicates the impact of the IDEAS Program to stakeholders and the public. Emphasis should be placed on highlighting how the program advances U.S. foreign policy goals and impacts U.S. communities. This plan should include, at a minimum, maintaining a web and social media presence, developing appropriate print and electronic materials, drafting and distributing press releases promoting program activities, notifying Congressional representatives and state governors of small grant recipients from their districts/states, and participating in relevant conferences.
6. **Data and Reporting.** Maintain and regularly update a program information and data reporting mechanism of applicant and participant information that ECA can also access, protecting personally identifiable information. The recipient is responsible for submitting semi-annual program and financial performance

reports that address, at a minimum, the following topics: past and planned program activities, updates on the achievements of the implementing organization and sub-award recipients, financial status (e.g., identify significant financial variations from original budgets), and the strengths and weaknesses of program design and implementation. Refer to G.3. Reporting Requirements for further guidance.

7. **Evaluation.** Present a plan to monitor and evaluate the program's success during the program and after its completion, including engaging previous sub-award recipients to determine long-term program impact as possible. The plan should include qualitative and quantitative measures agreed upon with ECA, including but not limited to: what institutions were funded; the successes and challenges of their programmatic activities; institutional changes in capacity and sustainability plans for the funded programs; an overview of the students participating in study abroad; and any increase and diversification of programming as a direct result of the sub-awards. Refer to D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation for further guidance.

U.S. applicant organizations or consortia must demonstrate four areas of competency needed to fulfill these duties and implement both program components: (1) ability to execute a national competition and manage multiple sub-awards; (2) subject matter expertise and capacity to provide programmatic support to a diverse range of U.S. higher education institutions in the execution of a variety of study abroad program models; (3) experience in evaluation and reporting; and (4) ability to implement innovative initiatives, through in-person and/or virtual activities, to share study abroad capacity building best practices with the wider U.S. study abroad community.

Organizations may demonstrate their direct expertise, or they may partner with other organizations to best respond to the requirements outlined in this solicitation. Organizations should outline all duties and responsibilities of partner and/or sub-award organization(s), preferably in the form of sub-award agreements and accompanying budgets.

A.6. U.S. Department of State Responsibilities

In a cooperative agreement, ECA/A/S/Q is substantially involved in program activities beyond routine monitoring. ECA/A/S/Q's activities and responsibilities for this program including the following:

1. Provide guidance in the execution of all major program components.
2. Review and approve all program print and online materials, highlight stories, and interview requests prior to publication or completion.
3. Review and approve the recruitment and outreach strategy for sub-award proposals.

4. Review and approve official program web presence and social media platforms and content.
5. Review and approve all program materials, including all Request for Proposals (RFP) and public/recipient materials.
6. Review and approve the selection process for all open competitions; observe selection committee panels.
7. Review and provide final approval on sub-award recipients, budgets, and plans.
8. Review and approve all program notification letters.
9. Concur on any changes in key project staff members.
10. Concur on the scope of work and resumes for consultants hired to perform key program functions.
11. Provide substantive input on and approval for all capacity building initiatives.
12. Approve follow-on reporting mechanisms and tools.
13. Approve decisions related to special circumstances or challenges that arise throughout the duration of the program.
14. Monitor the progress of the award recipient at each stage of the project's implementation.

B. Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement; ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A.6 U.S. Department of State Responsibilities.

Fiscal Year Funds: 2021 – \$1,500,000, pending the availability of funds

Approximate Total Funding: \$1,500,000, pending the availability of funds

Approximate Number of Awards: 1

Approximate Average Award: \$1,500,000, pending the availability of funds

Floor of Award Range: None

Ceiling of Award Range: \$1,500,000 pending the availability of funds

Anticipated Award Date: July 15, 2021

Anticipated Project Completion Date: December 31, 2023

Additional Information: 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. Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for two additional consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

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 award in the amount of \$1,500,000 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:
 - Eligible applicants must agree to full collaboration with ECA in the implementation of the program and include suggested approval procedures for major components of the program in their narrative and overall program timeline.
 - Due to the various responsibilities involved in the design and implementation of this program, prospective primary recipients can include a sub-recipient—who are responsible for carrying out specific activities or components of this program—as part of their application. Applications involving sub-recipients should clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of each sub-recipient. Letters of commitment from any sub-recipient should be included in the application.
 - Proposals requesting funding for infrastructure development activities, sometimes referred to as “brick and mortar” support are NOT eligible for consideration under this competition, will be declared technically ineligible and will receive 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 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 will 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 Office of Global Educational Programs U.S. Study Abroad Branch (ECA/A/S/Q), Rebecca Gailey, SA-5, Room 4-AA14, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, Phone (202) 632-9437, GaileyR@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.

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. See section E for more information.

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. 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.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.3g. FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY: ADHERENCE TO ALL REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE J VISA: The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper

administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
U.S. Department of State
SA-4E (Bldg. 3)
2430 E Street, NW
Washington, 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. All program-related materials must be submitted to ECA for approval prior to distribution. ECA retains copyright use of materials and will determine how and where to distribute materials related to this program.

D.3l. Budget Format: Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. **Budget requests may not exceed \$1,500,000.** There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants must provide separate sub-budgets for each of the two major program components.

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.3n. Allowable costs for the program may include the following:

1. Administrative costs:

- Staff salaries and benefits
- Staff travel (All air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act)
- Staff per diem (Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel-resources>)
- Rent and facilities
- Furniture and equipment
- Meetings and conferences
- Communication costs
- Network charges
- Indirect costs
- OMB Guidance 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F Audits

Applicant organizations should provide a detailed explanation of administrative overhead (what elements of the budget it is based upon and how it is calculated).

2. Program costs:

- Publicity
- Costs of national review committees including travel and per diem
- Web presence/on-line applications/program information and data reporting mechanism management
- Program materials
- Staff and sub-awardee travel
- Follow-on activities
- Monitoring
- Evaluation
- Subject matter experts/consultants (if needed)
- Other justifiable expenses directly related to supporting program activities

While there is no rigid ratio of administrative to program costs, the Bureau urges applicant organizations to keep administrative costs as low and reasonable as possible.

Proposals should show strong administrative cost sharing contributions from the applicant organization and other sources.

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

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

Application Deadline Date: Friday, March 5, 2021

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

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

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

How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

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

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

How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov

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

Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission issues to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays

Email: support@grants.gov

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

Applicants have until 11:59 p.m., Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after 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.3q. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. Proposal Contents:

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
 - a. Number and description of participants
 - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
 - c. Geographic diversity of program, both U.S. and overseas
 - d. Fields covered
 - e. 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

Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative

The anticipated level of base-year funding available for the FY2021 IDEAS Program is \$1,500,000.

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. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase the number and format of competitions and the number and format of capacity building initiatives in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Please refer to the PSI for allowable costs and complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

The available funding may be used to support the program and administrative costs necessary to implement the program as described in this solicitation. Applicant organizations must provide an explanatory budget narrative, separate sub-budgets for each of the two program components, and copies of any sub-award agreements to be implemented under the terms of this award. Please refer to section D.3o.above for information on allowable costs.

Additional Information to be Submitted:

- **Calendar of Activities** or timetable that demonstrates the timing and organization of the major program activities.
- **Letters of Endorsement** from collaborating organizations or institutions indicating their agreement and the role they will play in the program.
- **Resumes** of key staff members of the applicant and collaborating organizations. (No resume should exceed two pages.)
- **Outreach and Publicity Plan**
- **Capacity Building Initiatives Plan** that shows dynamic and innovative ideas on workshops, digital engagement, and other means to increase and diversify American student mobility abroad. Proposals for this component cannot exceed \$150,000.
- **Evaluation Plan and Sample Survey Instruments**

Applicants should limit attachments to information that is directly applicable to the program as described in this solicitation.

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.

F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION:

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the

Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

F.1. REVIEW CRITERIA

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

- 1. Quality of the Program Idea:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission.
- 2. Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Program Objectives:** 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. The objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
- 3. 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.
- 4. Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program goals. Proposals should demonstrate capacity to execute a national competition, manage multiple subawards, provide support to a diverse range of U.S. higher education institutions on study abroad programming, and implement innovative initiatives for the wider U.S. study abroad community. Proposals should also demonstrate an institutional record of responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by

Bureau Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

5. Multiplier Effect/Impact and Follow-on Activities: Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages, providing reporting on measuring increases in student mobility over time as a result of capacity building sub-awards. Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) ensuring that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.

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

7. Cost-effectiveness and Cost-sharing: The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions

G. Federal Award Administration Information:

G.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.

G.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>.

G.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;
4. A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 120 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to

OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

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

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

G.4. Program Data Requirements: Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the name, address, contact information, biographic sketch, and approximate itinerary of all persons who directly use funds provided by the agreement to travel internationally.

H. Agency Contacts:

For questions about this announcement, contact: Rebecca Gailey, Program Officer, U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Educational Programs U.S. Study Abroad Branch, ECA/A/S/Q; 2200 C Street NW, SA-5, 4-Y16, Washington, DC 20037; Phone (202) 632-9437, Email GaileyR@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.

I. 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 made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements as outlined in the NOFO.

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

December 8, 2020