

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY 2022 Critical Language Scholarship Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0007818

Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.009

Key Date/Application Deadline: June 2, 2021

Executive Summary: The Office of Global Educational Programs of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for the FY 2022 Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program for one or more award recipients to support the participation of a minimum of 575 U.S. undergraduate and graduate students in overseas summer language institutes and virtual language institutes.

The CLS Program is a component of the U.S. Department of State's effort to increase the number of Americans who learn critical foreign languages in support of the U.S. foreign policy goals of bolstering national security; promoting U.S. competitiveness and economic prosperity; and building mutual understanding with critical regions of the world. The CLS Program is administered by ECA's USA Study Abroad branch (ECA/A/S/Q). The CLS Program languages for this award, determined annually by ECA, currently include Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu.

The award will fund a minimum of 500 participants in the CLS overseas language institutes, which will take place during summer 2022 in countries and locations, approved by ECA, where the designated CLS Program languages are widely spoken. The award also supports CLS Virtual Institutes in one or more of the approximately 15 identified critical languages for an approximate minimum of 75 additional participants. ECA reserves the right to expand or eliminate the virtual institutes and/or adjust overall participant numbers as needed in and across component language institutes. The award supports programming for all CLS alumni since the program's inception in 2006.

U.S. public and private non-profit organizations, or consortia of such organizations, meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3), may submit proposals to cooperate with ECA in the overall administration of the CLS Program, the CLS Virtual Institutes, and/or the implementation of selected overseas summer language institutes, according to the guidance provided in this solicitation.

Applicants may submit a proposal to either administer the entire CLS program, including overseas language institutes in and across all language groups (Option One), or to administer overseas language institutes for no more than two regional language groups (Option Two). Applicants submitting proposals under Option One below must also submit a plan for CLS Virtual Institutes for an approximate minimum of 75 additional

participants according to guidance provided in this solicitation. Applicants submitting proposals under Option Two below have the option of also submitting a plan for the CLS Virtual Institutes.

Applicants may submit only one proposal for either Option One or Option Two 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. Applicants should select one of the following options:

Option One: Administrative Components, Implementation of Language Institutes, and CLS Virtual Institutes. Submit one proposal to implement the following:

- a) Administrative Components including overall program administration, pre-program recruitment and selection of participants, guidance and coordination for all summer institutes, annual meetings, and post-program follow-up activities including programs for alumni of all program years, *and*
- b) Implementation of Language Institutes for all of the regional language groups for a minimum of 500 participants as described in this solicitation *and*
- c) CLS Virtual Institutes for an approximate minimum of 75 additional participants as described in this solicitation.

Option Two: Implementation of Language Institute(s) only. Submit one proposal to implement summer language institutes for *no more than two* of the regional language groups listed below. Applicants under Option Two may also choose to submit a plan to implement one or more CLS Virtual Institutes as described in this solicitation, although it is not required. Participants in the CLS Virtual Institutes do *not* count toward the minimum target numbers outlined below.

CLS Regional Language Groups with minimum target numbers of participants:

- Near East and North Africa Region – Arabic Institutes (94 participants)
- East Asia and Pacific Region – Chinese (Mandarin), Indonesian, Japanese, and Korean Institutes (187 participants).
- Europe Region – Azerbaijani, Russian, and Turkish Institutes (91 participants).
- South Central Asia Region – Persian, Bangla, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu Institutes (77 participants).
- Sub-Saharan Africa Region AND Western Hemisphere Region – Swahili and Portuguese Institutes (51 participants).

CLS Virtual Institutes are intended to reach new or expanded audiences of American students, including those underrepresented in study abroad and/or those without access to the selected critical languages at their U.S. colleges or universities, as well as to further build capacity for virtual programming. Priority languages for the CLS Virtual Institutes are Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, and Russian.

Applicants under Option One are required to submit plans to conduct CLS Virtual Institutes in one or more of the priority languages for an approximate minimum of 75 participants in total; the budget for this component should not exceed \$500,000. Applicants under Option Two may submit a plan to implement CLS Virtual Institutes in one or more of the priority languages for a minimum of 20 participants in total; the budget for this component should not exceed \$135,000 in total.

Applicants may seek partners with expertise in one or more of the proposed languages to submit a single proposal as a consortium under Option One or under Option Two. Consortia submitting proposals must designate a lead organization (primary recipient) to receive the award. The lead organization must submit a signed and dated consortium agreement (or letter of intent) with the proposal.

U.S. applicant organizations or consortia must exhibit the necessary expertise and capacity in the host country or countries to implement the program either through their own offices or partner institutions. 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 clearly outline all duties and responsibilities of any partner or implementing organization(s).

Organizations or consortia applying for this award must demonstrate their capacity for conducting projects of this nature, focusing on three areas of competency: (1) provision of foreign language instructional programs for U.S. college and university students; (2) successful implementation of overseas immersion programs, including cultural enrichment activities; and (3) experience in conducting programs in the proposed host country or countries, or equivalent experience.

Only one award recipient will be selected to implement Option One, the Administrative Components of the CLS Program. ECA intends to award the implementation of not less than two regional language groups to the award recipient selected to implement Option One, the Administrative Components.

ECA reserves the right to accept proposals for Option One or Option Two in whole or in part and to make an award or awards based on the needs of the program and U.S. foreign policy objectives. ECA reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal for the CLS Virtual Institutes in whole or in part, and utilize some or all of the funding to support additional participants in the traditional CLS summer program.

ECA will select, and reserves the right to make changes to, eligible countries, locations, languages, numbers of proposed participants by language, and/or other elements of the program's design or implementation, considering any Department of State Travel Advisories and other relevant safety and security concerns, the availability of funding, or other factors as determined by ECA. ECA reserves the right to transition one or more

overseas institutes to virtual programming if needed to ensure the health and safety of the participants, the integrity of the program, or for other reasons.

Pending the availability of FY 2022 funds, it is anticipated that the total amount of funding available for all FY 2022 administrative and program costs to support the Administrative Components and the implementation of all language programming will be \$9,000,000.

A. Program Description:

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

Purpose:

The CLS Program is designed to increase the number of Americans who learn critical foreign languages in support of the U.S. foreign policy goals of increasing national security and promoting economic competitiveness. Global competencies for Americans, especially foreign language skills, are essential in engaging foreign governments and peoples, especially in critical world regions, in order to promote mutual understanding, solve complex multi-national issues, and advance American interests abroad. The ability of Americans to succeed individually and collectively in a global economy is enhanced through their understanding of critical languages and cultures across the globe. The CLS Program accelerates and advances participants' language skills through a combination of structured classroom language instruction and less formal interactive and applied learning opportunities. For additional information, please visit <https://exchanges.state.gov/us/cls>.

Goals of the CLS Program:

- To develop a cadre of diverse Americans with advanced linguistic skills and related cultural understanding who are able to advance international dialogue, bolster national security, contribute to U.S. economic prosperity, and build mutual understanding.
- To improve the ability of Americans to engage with the people of other countries in the language of the host country; and
- To develop additional overseas critical language study capacity for U.S. students.

In order to achieve these goals, ECA supports programs for U.S. undergraduate and graduate students to gain and improve language proficiency and related cultural competency skills in critical languages, currently including Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu.

Expected Program Outcomes:

- 1) Participants will demonstrate a substantive, measurable increase in language proficiency (oral comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing), as verified through pre- and post-program assessment utilizing a widely-recognized, standardized language assessment tool for oral proficiency.
- 2) Participants will demonstrate a deeper understanding of the host country's society, institutions, and culture.
- 3) Participants will share American culture with their overseas peers, host families, and other members of the host community.
- 4) Alumni will continue their language learning, apply their linguistic skills in their academic, career, and volunteer activities, and/or participate in other exchanges and educational activities to further their language learning and application.
- 5) Alumni will share their overseas experiences with others in their home educational institutions and communities.
- 6) Host country capacity to support language study by U.S. students will be increased through teacher training and experience in working with CLS participants.

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. These activities and the roles and responsibilities of the Department and your organization are outlined in the attached Project, Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document.

B. Federal Award Information:

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

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2022

Approximate Total Funding: \$9,000,000, pending the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: One or more.

Approximate Average Award: \$9,000,000, pending the availability of funds.

Floor of Award Range: None.

Ceiling of Award Range: 9,000,000, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Award Date: October 1, 2021, pending the availability of FY 2022 funds.

Anticipated Project Completion Date: September 30, 2023

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

competing it again. The Department reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. In addition, ECA reserves the right to accept proposals for Option One and Option Two in whole or in part and to make an award or awards based on the needs of the program and U.S. foreign policy objectives.

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.) ECA grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in ECA funding. ECA anticipates awarding one or more cooperative agreement awards in an amount over \$130,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

b.) 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, ECA 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, ECA 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 (ECA/A/S/Q), SA-5, Room 4-AA17, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, Telephone (202) 632-9354, RadomskiCA@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which consists of required application forms and standard guidelines for proposal preparation.

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

Please specify Program Officer Carol Radomski and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet: The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from ECA'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.3o. “**Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures**” 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. Please refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document and the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

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.3d. Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System (FAPIS): 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 FAPIS (see 41 U.S.C. 2313) and accessible through SAM.gov. If an Applicant is currently in FAPIS, 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 FAPIS, 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

D.3g. Diversity, Freedom, and Democracy Guidelines: Pursuant to ECA'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," ECA "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: ECA 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. ECA 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. ECA 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 ECA 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 ECA 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.

CLS Virtual Institutes: Applicants for Option One are required to propose virtual programming as part of the CLS Virtual Institutes as described in this solicitation. Applicants for Option Two are encouraged to submit a plan for one or more CLS Virtual Institutes. Refer to the POGI for additional guidance on the CLS Virtual Institutes.

Emergency Planning: As part of emergency planning, all applicants must submit a plan to carry out some or all CLS language institutes virtually to ensure the health and safety of the participants or for any other reason as determined by ECA. Refer to the POGI for additional guidance.

Alumni Programming: Applicants for Option One are strongly encouraged to propose virtual programming, either synchronous or asynchronous, aimed at supporting alumni in maintaining and further improving their language skills and/or applying their language skills in their studies and/or careers.

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:

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

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

Application Deadline Date: Wednesday, June 2, 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.30. Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures

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

How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

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

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

How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov

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

Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues

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

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

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

Email: support@grants.gov

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

Applicants have until 11:59 p.m., Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after the application deadline date and time will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

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

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

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

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

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

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov. Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>.

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

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

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

ECA 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 ECA 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 ECA's Grants Officer.

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 ECA'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. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's goals and objectives. The program plans should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Emergency or contingency plans should be clearly articulated and comprehensive.
- 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. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past ECA awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by ECA Grants Staff. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
- 4. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of ECA'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 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. Participant Monitoring: The safety and well-being of CLS Program participants is of highest priority. Proposals should include a plan for ensuring and monitoring the safety and well-being of CLS participants while on program. The plan should clearly address protocols for emergencies for both individuals and groups.

6. Follow-on/Alumni Activities: Proposals should provide a plan for continued contact with alumni to ensure that they are tracked over time, engaged in appropriate alumni activities, and provided opportunities to reinforce the knowledge and skills acquired on the CLS Program.

7. Project Evaluation: Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. ECA recommends that the proposal include draft survey questionnaires or other techniques plus a description of proposed methodology to link outcomes to original project objectives. Proposals should include a plan to assess the performance of organizations implementing CLS Institutes overseas. A chart describing evaluation objectives, outcomes, indicators, data sources, instruments, and time line is recommended. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports.

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

F. Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Award Notices: Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal ECA procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from ECA'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.

The award recipient(s) will be expected to keep ECA informed of program progress, as well as other aspects of the program throughout the year. During the implementation of overseas or virtual institutes, award recipient(s) will be expected to provide brief weekly

updates or highlights on each institute, as well as final institute report(s) at the conclusion of the program.

The recipient(s) must share program evaluation reports, both interim and summary reports, with ECA in a timely manner, and make appropriate adjustments to the programs in consultation with ECA. Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to ECA in their regular program reports. (Please refer to section D.3h., “Program Monitoring and Evaluation.”)

F.4. Program Data Requirements: Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with ECA as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, and contact information of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel, including participants in virtual programming.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

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

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Program Officer Carol Radomski, U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Educational Programs, ECA/A/S/Q, SA-5, 4-AA17, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, Telephone (202) 664-3248, Email: RadomskiCA@state.gov.

All correspondence with ECA 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, ECA 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 ECA representative. Explanatory information provided by ECA that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards will be subject to periodic programmatic and financial reporting and evaluation requirements as outlined in the NOFO.

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

March 15, 2021