

**Department of State****Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO):**

FY 2023 Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan (Global UGRAD - Pakistan)

**Announcement Type:** New Cooperative Agreement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** SFOP0009546

**Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number:** 19.009

**Key Date/Application Deadline:** May 22, 2023

**Executive Summary:** The Office of Academic Exchange Programs of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition to administer the FY 2023 Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to organize and carry out academic exchange activities for students from underrepresented sectors in Pakistan. Support for this program is being provided from FY 2022/FY 2023 Economic Support Funds (ESF) that ECA anticipates being transferred from USAID to the Bureau for obligation prior to the funds' expiration on September 30, 2023. It is anticipated that the total amount of funding for FY 2023 costs will be up to \$3,792,500, pending the transfer and availability of funds.

Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

**A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

**A.1. Authority:** 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. Support for this program is being provided from FY 2022/FY 2023 Economic Support Funds (ESF) that are being transferred to ECA for obligation to conduct the FY 2023 Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan (Global UGRAD – Pakistan) under the Fulbright-Hays Act.

**A.2. Purpose:** The principal objective of the FY 2023 Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan (herein referred to as "Global UGRAD – Pakistan") is to provide a substantive

exchange experience at a U.S. college or university to a diverse group of emerging student leaders from underrepresented socio-economic and geographic sectors in Pakistan. The students will complete one semester of non-degree undergraduate study in the United States at accredited two- and four-year institutions. In this context, the recipient organization should ensure that participants are able to enroll full-time in courses at U.S. institutions alongside U.S. peers and provide the participants with opportunities and enrichment activities designed to help them understand the United States and U.S. citizens inside and outside the classroom. To enhance the knowledge and skills of the participants, each student cohort should have leadership development as an overarching theme for the program, which will focus on increasing the leadership skills of the participants.

**A.3. Program Specific Guidelines:** Participants will return to Pakistan at the conclusion of the exchange program to re-enter colleges and universities there and re-integrate with their home communities. An objective of the program is to provide participants with tailored instruction in the academic skills and study habits required to be successful at the undergraduate level and better prepared for higher level studies in the future.

The recipient organization will be responsible for the following aspects of the program: placement of approximately 108 Pakistani students at accredited U.S. institutions (54 fall semester 2024, 54 spring semester 2025), student travel to the United States, arrival orientation, enrichment programming, advising, monitoring and support, re-entry workshop, evaluation, and follow-up with program alumni.

The Global UGRAD Pakistan Program will provide scholarships for study at U.S. institutions of higher education to outstanding Pakistani students from non-elite sectors in Pakistan. Scholarships will be granted primarily to students who are currently enrolled in an undergraduate degree program in Pakistan, although students just completing their final year of high school will also be eligible. The recipient organization will place participants in non-degree programs at both two- and four-year U.S. colleges and universities.

The recipient organization should develop enrichment activities to enhance the participants' academic education, including having students participate in community service and make local presentations about their country. Transfers of academic program or visa sponsorship of participants to another U.S. institution will not be considered.

ECA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for this program. Programs and projects must conform to Bureau requirements and guidelines outlined in the Solicitation Package. ECA programs are subject to the availability of funds.

Programs must comply with J-1 Visa regulations. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for further information.

#### **A.4. Recipient Responsibilities**

The activities and the roles and responsibilities of the recipient for this program are outlined in the attached Project, Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document.

#### **A.5. Substantial Involvement:**

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. These activities are outlined in the attached POGI document.

### **B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

**Type of Award:** Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description above.

**Fiscal Year Funds:** FY 2023.

**Approximate Total Funding:** \$3,792,500, pending the transfer and availability of FY 2022/FY 2023 Pakistan Economic Support Funds (ESF).

**Approximate Number of Awards:** 1

**Approximate Average Award:** \$3,792,500 pending the transfer and availability of FY 2022/FY 2023 Pakistan Economic Support Funds (ESF).

**Floor of Award Range:** None

**Ceiling of Award Range:** \$3,792,500 pending the transfer and availability of FY 2022/FY 2023 Pakistan Economic Support Funds (ESF).

**Anticipated Award Date:** September 30, 2023

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** June 30, 2026

**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 cooperative agreement for two additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets or participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

### **C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

#### **C.1. Eligible Applicants**

U.S. public and private academic and cultural institutions, exchange-of-persons, and other not-for-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit applications for this competition. Applicants must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

All applicants must also have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and be registered in SAM.gov (see additional information about this requirement in D.3. and D.5. below).

## **C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements**

The following additional eligibility requirements apply to this NOFO announcement:

- 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 an amount of \$3,792,500. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.
- b.) All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, POGI and the PSI; non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.
- c.) Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

**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 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**

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. Solicitation Package Location**

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the ECA's website at <https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov>.

**D.2. Content and Form of Submission**

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which consists of required application forms and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.16. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

**D.3. 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.4. Required Proposal Elements**

All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative, budget, and budget narrative.

**D.5. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM)**

All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain a current registration in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) until all program and financial activity and reporting is completed on any issued award. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts. Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>

#### **D.6. 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.7. 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](mailto:ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov) and copy the program officer associated with the solicitation.

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

#### **D.8. Adherence To All Regulations Governing the J Visa**

ECA places critically important emphasis 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. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of Responsible Officers and

Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

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

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

Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation  
U.S. Department of State  
SA-5, Floor C2, Room C2L13  
2200 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20522

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

#### **D.9. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) and Freedom and Democracy Guidelines**

Pursuant to ECA's authorizing legislation, "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, geographic location, education, income, socio-economic status, and other diversity dimensions, that may hinder inclusion. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. 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. Please refer to the "Support of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility" review criterion of this document for more information on how this will be reviewed as a part of any application. Please also refer to the "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility" section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating DEIA into the 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.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**

Distinct from grants or cooperative agreement monitoring and participant monitoring, performance monitoring is designed to assess progress against a program's goals and objectives. A performance monitoring framework is vital to tracking the direction, pace, and magnitude of change that result from ECA programs.

ECA created the Monitoring Data for ECA (MODE) Framework to measure the performance of ECA programs. **The MODE Framework provides standard indicators and corresponding survey questions to ensure consistent measures across all ECA programs.** More resources and guidance documents on the MODE Framework are available online at:

<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>.

For this proposal, ECA requires the applicant include the MODE Framework objectives and indicators listed below (note that, because not all MODE objectives and indicators are relevant for a program, the numbering below will not be sequential). In addition to the ECA-required objectives and indicators, applicants may also select additional MODE Framework indicators (see the Indicator Book on the MODE Framework website), or design custom objectives and indicators that are specific to the proposed program and this proposal.

- Demographic Questions as outlined in the Indicator Book on page vi, and Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) (<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>)
- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
  - Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities.
    - E1.1.04: Percent of participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government (core indicator)
    - E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator)
    - E1.1.10: Percent of foreign participants who traveled to the United States for the first time during their program (core indicator)
    - E1.1.13: Percent of foreign participants who are more likely to recommend the United States as a good place to study.
    - E1.1.17: Percent foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American People (core indicator)
    - E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator)
    - E1.1.19: Percent of participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator)



- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries.
  - E2.0.01: Percent of foreign participants that volunteer in their host communities
  - E2.0.04: Number of hours that foreign participants spend volunteering in their host communities.
  - Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster participant's belief that civic engagement benefits communities/countries
    - E2.2.01: Percent of participants who have more confidence in their ability to have an impact in their home country (core indicator)
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
  - E3.0.02: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of Americans (core indicator)
  - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)
  - Sub-Objective 3.1: Alumni subscribe to platforms for resources and information-sharing.
    - E3.1.02: Percent of participants who learned about new resources.
    - E3.1.05: Percent of participants who are connected to ECA through a U.S. Department of State-managed platform.
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries.
  - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation.
  - E4.0.05: Percent of participants who report an increase in technical skills as a result of their program participation.
  - Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs.
    - E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
    - E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts (core indicator)
- Objective 5: Increase Capacity of ECA partner institutions to achieve program strategic goals.
  - Sub-Objective 5.1: Increase capacity of implementing partners and educational institutions for the internationalization of programs.
    - E5.1.02: Number of exchange participants from or hosted by Minority-Serving Institutions participating in ECA (both funded and private sector) exchanges (core indicator)
- Objective 6: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau's resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships.
  - E6.0.03: Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

### Performance Monitoring Plans (PMP)

ECA recommends the use of a PMP to serve as the primary reference document for performance monitoring for this award. If used, the PMP is an important part of any proposal, as it outlines how the applicant plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions. A PMP document that includes all MODE Framework indicators is a part of this solicitation's attachments. Specific instructions on how to modify the PMP to be responsive to this solicitation are included in that document. While ECA recommends the applicant use the PMP format provided, this is not a requirement. If a PMP is not included in the proposal, applicants should provide similar information to that found in the suggested PMP format, in a presentation of your choice. A training on how to complete a PMP is available here: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>. Successful PMPs (or similar documentation) should include the following:

- **Objectives.** Programmatic objectives are statements of the condition(s) that state what the program is designed to achieve. Objectives are therefore bound by the resources and timeframe of the program and must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART; see the ECA Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Innovation (MELI) Unit's pages on the ECA website for more information: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-evaluation-division/capacity-building>). In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the MODE Framework, the Functional Bureau Strategy (<https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau>), or other applicant-designed program-specific objectives.
- **Indicators.** Performance indicators are measures used to gauge progress toward programmatic objectives and sub-objectives. Indicators should be as specific as possible (following the SMART principles) and include any proposed disaggregations (meaning, breakdowns of the data by subgroups, such as gender or country; the PMP lists the demographic questions required to obtain the information necessary to report the disaggregation). Each indicator should also include a target number to be achieved. A target is a planned level of result to be achieved within an explicit timeframe.
  - If you do not use the PMP format provided, note that any performance monitoring reference document the applicant submits should include the information in the column headers (Indicator Name, Definition, Target, Survey Question, etc.) in the PMP attachment at a minimum.
  - In addition to those indicators outlined in above, the applicant may propose additional custom, program-specific indicators in the PMP (ECA recommends the proposed PMPs include a minimum of one indicator for each custom programmatic objective).
  - During the period of performance of the award, the ECA program office may further revise, add, or remove indicators. Therefore, the applicant's PMP and

data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established.

Award recipients are responsible for collecting indicator data only on participant outcomes during the period of performance of the award itself (see the PMP for guidelines as to when these data collection efforts should occur). ECA will measure outcomes of ECA participants at one, three, five, and 10 years after the exchange has ended to capture the long-term impact of ECA programming unless otherwise specified in the NOFO and/or POGI. In this instance, the recipient will be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to de-duplicate questions and minimize potential survey fatigue.

Award recipients will be required to submit an upload of the raw data (in CSV format) along with the State Assistance Management System Domestic (SAMS-D RPM) reporting (see below). Regardless of the survey platform used, **all** MODE Framework survey questions outlined above are **required** (i.e., should be forced response); please see the Consent Language in the MODE Framework Indicator Book for more information on how to convey this to participants/survey respondents.

### **Program Performance M&E Narrative**

The applicant should include information within the program narrative section(s) of the proposal that outlines how the applicant intends to measure the indicators listed above. This will be separate from the PMP and should include but not be limited to:

- An overview of resources available to the applicant that outline the team structure and responsibilities surrounding performance monitoring.
- The mechanism(s) through which surveys and other data collection tools (if applicable) will be administered, including which platform will be used, and when and how surveys will be advertised to participants – detailing strategies to ensure adequate survey response rates ([https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/eca\\_eval\\_division\\_survey\\_response\\_rates.pdf](https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/eca_eval_division_survey_response_rates.pdf)), and to reduce selection and non-response bias.
- A brief explanation of data analysis and reporting procedures.
- An overview of a proposed learning plan and feedback loops to ensure that the Grant Officer (GO)/Grant Officer Representative (GOR) are informed on performance monitoring issues at regular intervals.

### **SAMS-D RPM Reporting Requirements**

The SAMS-D is a database solution that serves as the official system of record for all U.S. Department of State and ECA awards. The Results Performance Monitoring (RPM) module within SAMS-D is an extension module that enables users to report performance monitoring data in the same system where they currently manage federal assistance actions. As part of ECA's efforts to streamline data collection and management, the recipient(s) of this award will

be required to input performance reporting data outlined in this solicitation into the SAMS-D RPM. The data stored in the SAMS-D RPM will provide ECA with a bureau-wide, uniform M&E reporting tool that is already linked with other elements of the awards familiar to existing awardees.

#### **D.11. Virtual Exchange Component**

When changing political, health, environmental, or other similar circumstances require a suspension or halt of in-person activities and where ECA determines that a virtual alternative is appropriate and viable, award recipients should demonstrate the ability and capacity to transition from in-person to virtual exchanges.

ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA 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) 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. 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.12. 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.13. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial**

ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as “America250” – a truly global celebration. As the period of performance for this award is scheduled to cover part or all of calendar year (CY) 2026, the applicant may wish to consider ways the program can celebrate America250. Any America250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided America250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

#### **D.14. 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 \$3,792,500, pending the availability of funding. There must be a summary budget, a detailed budget including breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets and a budget narrative. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase,

location, or activity to provide clarification. Overhead costs, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible.

#### **D.15. 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.16. Application Deadline and Method of Submission**

**Application Deadline Date: Monday, May 22, 2023**

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.17. 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>).

##### **D.18.a. 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>

##### **D.18.b. 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>

##### **D.18.c. Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues**

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

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

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

Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

**D.18.d. 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 found 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.19. Intergovernmental Review of Applications**

Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

### **E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

#### **E.1. Review Process**

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 the ECA's Grants Officer.

#### **E.2. 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/Program Planning.** The proposal should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above and clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and design. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
- 2. 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. The proposal should also provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) which ensures that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.

**3. Support of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA):** Proposals should show substantive support of ECA's policy on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. Proposals should demonstrate how DEIA will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and program design, content and implementation, including individual participant recruitment, selection and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated DEIA plan and not simply express general support for the concept of DEIA. Proposals should demonstrate how DEIA will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities.

**4. Institutional Capacity/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 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. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Proposals should include a fully developed performance M&E narrative and a PMP (or similar document) that includes the goals, objectives, and indicators used. Proposals will be evaluated for feasibility and alignment with the M&E section of this solicitation, including if: 1) M&E resources, monitoring mechanisms, and data analysis and reporting procedures are sufficiently detailed and realistic; 2) a realistic learning plan provides a strategy to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices in conjunction with the Grant Officer/GOR; and 3) a PMP (or other document that includes similar information) is complete, clear, and well-organized. All submitted PMPs and M&E narrative sections will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided information on the minimum data required as per the solicitation.

**6. Cost-effectiveness/ Cost-sharing:** The overhead 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.

**7. Value to U.S.-Partner Country Relations:** Proposed projects should receive positive assessments from the U.S. Department of State's Regional Bureau(s) and from Public Affairs Sections (PAS) at U.S. Embassies overseas of program need, potential impact, and significance in the partner country.

## **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 the ECA's Grants Division. 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 applicable to all ECA agreements include:

- 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.
- U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions.

For a copy of the OMB Guidance cited, please download from the [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov) website.

For a copy of the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, or to review other Department of State assistance information, please download from:

<https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>

## **F.3. Reporting Requirements**

All reports must be submitted in a timely manner. 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/grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer.) The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's [SAMS Domestic](http://sams.state.gov).
- 2.) The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the

approved report to [SAMS Domestic](#), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Cooperative Agreements/Grants.

In the event you are having difficulty uploading reports and the ILMS help desk is not providing sufficient assistance, please email [ECA\\_SAMSDomestic@state.gov](mailto:ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov).

- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award;

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to ECA in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) information.)

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

**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, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 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 workdays prior to the official opening of the activity.

## G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Teresa Mastrangelo, U.S. Department of State, Office of Academic Exchange Programs, South and Central Asia Programs, ECA/A/E/SCA, SA-5, 4th, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, 202-255-0988, [mastrangeloTE@state.gov](mailto:mastrangeloTE@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.

Scott Weinhold  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs  
U.S. Department of State

March 20, 2023