U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2024 Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students (IDEAS) Program
Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0010162
Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.009
Deadline for Applications: March 11, 2024

Executive Summary:
The U.S. Study Abroad Branch (ECA/A/S/Q) within the Office of Global Educational Programs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, is pleased to announce an open competition for proposals to administer the FY 2024 Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students (IDEAS) Program. The IDEAS Program advances the Bureau's objective of supporting mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by building the institutional capacity of U.S. higher education institutions to increase and/or diversify U.S. study abroad in support of U.S. foreign policy goals. For the purposes of this award, diversification of study abroad programming includes but is not limited to:

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

The FY 2024 IDEAS Program aims to increase and diversify study abroad through two main components, the administration of small grants and the implementation of capacity building initiatives for the U.S. higher education community. Pending availability of funds, the recipient will work in close consultation with ECA to implement these two components under this award:

1. **Administration of Small Grants to Support Capacity Building:** The award recipient will implement at least one open, merit-based competition that will result in approximately 32 subawards to accredited U.S. colleges and universities to create, expand, and/or diversify their study abroad programs in support of U.S. foreign policy goals. The award recipient should look for efficiencies to maximize the number of subawards available thereby providing further opportunities to U.S. institutions under this program. Selection criteria for subawards should fully reflect the overall goals and criteria for the small grants as stated in Section A of this NOFO. The award recipient will provide

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

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

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.

A.2. Purpose
The IDEAS Program is designed to increase and diversify U.S. study abroad in support of U.S. foreign policy goals. It is imperative that our next generation of leaders — U.S. students of all

backgrounds — engage internationally to foster mutual understanding and develop global skills in fields that are key to supporting U.S. national security, economic prosperity, and connection with the world. Through the provision of small grants and virtual and/or in-person capacity building initiatives, the IDEAS Program supports U.S. higher education institutions to create and expand study abroad programming that will best prepare their students with the global skills needed in their communities, as well as in the United States at large. The program directly benefits U.S. communities by preparing U.S. students of all backgrounds with cultural competencies, foreign language skills, personal and/or professional networks in other countries, and academic and/or professional knowledge that prepare them for successful careers. The program also directly advances mutual understanding between the United States and other countries by building institutional capacity to send more U.S. students to more destinations, where they serve as citizen ambassadors by sharing U.S. culture and values with their peers. The IDEAS Program plays an important role in increasing and diversifying the U.S. higher education institutions engaging in study abroad, the population of U.S. students who study abroad, and the destinations where they study. Program activities may as a secondary benefit build foreign colleges and universities' capacity to work with their U.S. partners and host more U.S. students – thereby helping to increase and diversify destinations where U.S. students can safely study abroad – but the primary program goal and focus of project activities is building U.S. higher education capacity.

A.3. Expected Program Outcomes
The program outcomes are outlined below.
1. Accredited U.S. colleges and universities representing the diversity of U.S. higher education will:
    a. Create or expand their capacity to administer study abroad programs that are primarily for U.S. undergraduate students and align with U.S. foreign policy goals;
    b. Increase and diversify the U.S. undergraduate students they send to study or intern abroad for academic credit, including those from historically underrepresented groups; and
    c. Expand study abroad to new overseas destinations, particularly those that are less common study abroad destinations.
2. The IDEAS Program will collect, develop, and share best practices for increasing and diversifying study abroad opportunities for U.S. students with the broader U.S. higher education community through trainings and other capacity building initiatives.

A.4. Administration of Small Grants to Support Capacity Building
ECA anticipates that the award recipient will conduct at least one national open competition that will result in approximately 32 subawards to accredited U.S. colleges and universities to create, expand, and/or diversify their U.S. study abroad programs, partnerships, and resources aligned with U.S. foreign policy goals.

Applicants should propose and justify the number of subawards and maximum funding amount of subawards. Applicants may propose a higher maximum funding amount be provided to consortia of U.S. colleges and universities to develop joint study abroad programming, research, and resources aligned with one or more Department priorities, to be determined in consultation with ECA. The maximum amount of program funds possible should go toward supporting subawards, though applicants should be sure to include appropriate levels of staffing to provide subaward applicant and recipient support, especially as this is a capacity-building program. Under the FY 2023 award, the current funding maximum provided to institutional subawardees is $35,000 and a total maximum award of $50,000 is provided to consortia.

ECA reserves the right to adjust the number of subawards and subaward funding limits based on availability of funding. ECA also reserves the right to instruct the award recipient to include language in its subaward request for proposals noting a possibility for renewing subawards, pending the availability of funding and satisfactory performance.

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

The award recipient should oversee selection panels made of U.S. higher education representatives, including but not limited to study abroad staff, who will rank and recommend proposals for funding. At a minimum, successful subaward applications should demonstrate the following:
1. A clear, well-articulated plan to build institutional capacity to increase and/or diversify the number of U.S. undergraduate students who study abroad and/or the destinations where they study.
2. A clear description of how the proposed plan directly addresses one or more identified U.S. foreign policy goals, a list of which will be provided by ECA.
3. A clear description of how, as a direct result of the subaward, the applicant will in the

near term increase the number of U.S. undergraduate students that study and/or
4. A plan for the sustainability of the proposed program after federal funding ends.
5. A connection to the institution's U.S. student mobility abroad, internationalization, or broader campus goals, if relevant.

Applicants should propose the subaward period of performance length best able to achieve program goals. The maximum allowable subaward period of performance is 18 months.

ECA reserves the right to provide additional eligibility, selection criteria, and subaward period of performance parameters, or to modify these requirements, as needed.

A.5. Implementation of Other Capacity Building Initiatives
The award recipient will implement capacity building initiatives for the wider U.S. study abroad community to increase and diversify U.S. student mobility. Applicants should propose a plan that includes: hosting virtual and/or in-person topical seminars relevant to increasing and diversifying American student mobility; spotlighting and sharing best practices from subaward recipients; and other creative virtual engagements, resources, or networks to build connections and increase study abroad capacity within U.S higher education institutions. Applicants should propose at least six virtual and/or in-person activities, which can be of various formats and lengths.

The topics of the seminars, virtual engagements, and other capacity building initiatives will be developed in consultation with ECA. Initiatives may cover, but are not limited to, topics such as developing international partnerships; expanding programming to diverse destinations; supporting U.S. undergraduate students from underrepresented groups in study abroad; building study abroad capacity at community colleges, minority serving institutions, or other institution types with traditionally lower levels of study abroad engagement; connecting study abroad to local economic goals; health, safety, and risk management; curriculum integration; and other proposed topics relevant to the needs of the U.S. study abroad field.

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

Applicants proposing in-person activities should include all logistical costs for program activities in their budgets, including but not limited to meals, space rentals, speakers, and travel grants to facilitate attendance by representatives from low-resource institutions.

Proposals for this element should not exceed $150,000 in total. ECA reserves the right to adjust the number and funding amount of capacity building initiatives based on availability of funding and the needs of the program.

A.6. Recipient Responsibilities
The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:
1. **Program planning and management.**
    a. Develop a detailed program plan and timeline of key activities to administer the program for approval by ECA.
    b. Provide an overall staffing plan, including level of effort for each position, sufficient to carry out program activities.
    c. Conduct regular meetings in-person or virtually with the ECA Program Officer and key personnel. Provide ECA with minutes of these meetings, including action items and key deadlines.
2. **Administration of small grants competition(s) for subawards.**
    a. Develop and implement a solicitation, application, screening, and merit-based review process for the national small grants competition(s) and resulting subawards. Submit the recommended institutions and alternates to ECA for approval before notifying applicants.
    b. Propose strategies for supporting institutions with less experience in applying for subawards.
3. **Management and support of subawards.**
    a. Manage all subawards resulting from the small grant competition(s), both programmatically and financially, including monitoring, advising, and supporting subaward recipients as they implement their projects.
    b. Check in virtually and/or in-person with subaward recipients and regularly provide ECA with a summary of any notable recipient activities.
    c. Develop a mentoring plan and connect subaward recipients with mentor institutions who can provide advice and guidance as they work to increase and diversify their study abroad programming.
    d. Outline innovative methods for virtually connecting selected institutions to build a peer support network.
4. **Administration of capacity building initiatives.**
    a. Design, plan, and implement virtual and/or in-person capacity building initiatives that focus on increasing and diversifying U.S. student mobility abroad.
    b. Develop, collate, and share resources from capacity building initiatives with the wider U.S. study abroad community through the program website.
5. **Outreach and publicity.**
    a. Develop and implement an outreach and communications plan that generates a strong pool of diverse, eligible U.S. higher education institutions to participate in program activities. The plan should also communicate the impact of the IDEAS

Program to stakeholders and the public, including by providing updates on funded activities through the program website and other platforms. Emphasis should be placed on highlighting how the program advances U.S. foreign policy goals and impacts U.S. communities.

b. This plan must also include the development and maintenance of a program website. The website must include a section dedicated to showcasing IDEAS Program, USG, and foreign government resources that support U.S. study abroad programming that is easily searchable and accessible to a variety of audiences. ECA will consult on and contribute entries to this website section.

c. The plan must include, at a minimum, developing a program-specific social media strategy, managing social media platforms, disseminating newsletter(s) to share program updates with key audiences, developing appropriate print and electronic materials, notifying Congressional representatives and state governors of subaward recipients from their districts/states as directed by ECA, and participating in relevant conferences.

6. **Alumni Tracking and Engagement.**

a. Provide an alumni engagement strategy and timeline. This should include a plan for continued contact with institutions that have received IDEAS subawards to ensure they are tracked over time, organized as alumni, and offered on-going engagement opportunities to continue building study abroad capacity at their institutions and/or to support capacity building efforts at current subaward recipient institutions.

b. This strategy should include a plan for the recruitment, selection, and training of IDEAS Program Ambassadors. These representatives from U.S. higher education institutions that have received IDEAS Grants will support program activities, including outreach and marketing efforts.

c. Maintain a database of all IDEAS subaward recipients and ensure protection of personally identifiable information.

d. Implement an alumni survey across program years to measure the longer-term impact of the program on institutional study abroad capacity, which should be developed in consultation with ECA.

7. **Data and reporting.**

a. Maintain and regularly update a program database that ECA can also access and that can be used to track and report on applicant and subawardee/participant information, protecting personally identifiable information.

b. Submit semi-annual program and financial performance reports that address, at a minimum, the following topics: past and planned program activities, updates on the achievements of the implementing organization and subaward recipients, financial status (e.g., identify significant financial variations from original budgets), and the strengths and weaknesses of program design and implementation.

8. **Program performance monitoring and evaluation**.
   a. Present a plan to monitor and evaluate the program's success during the program and after its completion, including engaging previous subaward recipients to determine long-term program impact as possible. The plan should include qualitative and quantitative measures agreed upon with ECA. Please see section D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) below for more details.

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

A.7. Substantial Involvement:
In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring, including but not limited to:
1. Review and concurrence on program print and online materials, including press or public responses, prior to publication or completion.
2. Review and approval of overall recruitment and outreach strategy for subaward proposals.
3. Review and approval of official program web presence and social media platforms and strategy.
4. Review and concurrence on program materials, including all Request for Proposals (RFP) and public/recipient materials.
5. Approval of the recommended selection and notification processes for all open competitions, including observance of selection committee panels.
6. Approval of recommended subaward recipients, budgets, and plans.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A.7. Substantial Involvement under A. Program Description.
Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2024
Approximate Total Funding: $2,100,000, pending the availability of funds.
Approximate Number of Awards: 1
Approximate Average Award: $2,100,000, pending the availability of funds.
Minimum "Floor" of Award: Approximately $2,100,000, pending the availability of funds.

Maximum "Ceiling" of Award: $2,100,000, pending the availability of funds.
Anticipated Award Date: June 1, 2024
Anticipated Project Completion Date: December 31, 2027
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 Department reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets; the number of small grant competitions; the number and amount of small grants awarded; and the number, format, and funding amount of capacity building initiatives 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.

C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements
The following additional eligibility requirements apply to this NOFO announcement:

1. ECA's 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 making one cooperative agreement, in an amount of approximately $2,100,000 to support all costs required to implement this program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

2. All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI); non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

3. In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 & D.5. for more information.

4. 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 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
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

All organizations are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. ***Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required for federal assistance applications. A UEI is issued as part of the required SAM.gov registration below in section D.5.***

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

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 organizations 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. ***Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.*** Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

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.

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

Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.

D.6.   Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov (formerly, FAPIIS)
    1.) The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and

consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

2.) An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. Currently, federal agencies create integrity records in the integrity module of the Contractor Performance Assessment and Reporting System (CPARS) and these records are visible as responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov;

3.) The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, 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 §200.206 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 and copy the program officer associated with the solicitation.

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

D.8.   For Informational Purposes Only - 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. 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 DEIA" 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.

- Objective 6: Increase Capacity of ECA partner institutions to achieve program strategic goals
    - E6.0.02: Percent of ECA-funded U.S. Higher Education Institutions that created new study abroad/exchange partnerships
    - E6.0.04: Percent of ECA-funded U.S. Higher Education Institutions that report an increase in U.S. study abroad students
    - E6.0.05: Percent of ECA-funded U.S. Higher Education Institutions that have a formal strategic plan for creating, expanding, or diversifying study abroad
- Objective 8: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau's resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships
    - E8.0.03: Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

Performance Monitoring Plans (PMPs)
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.

The recommended objectives and corresponding indicators for this program are not included in the PMP document attached to this solicitation. The applicant will need to refer to the MODE Performance Indicator Reference Sheets to complete their PMP. The applicant can look under the Objective 6 indicators; the *Indicator Code* field will match the numbers above (ex.E6.0.02) and other PMP fields are included on the reference sheet.

The MODE Performance Indicator Reference Sheets can be found here:
https://app.box.com/s/nhjit7n3l1d17z9xn0luoaes69nxm4zd

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
  disaggregations). 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.
  - o 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.
  - o 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).
  - o 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 and alumni

outcomes, as outlined in section A.6. Recipient Responsibilities, during the period of performance of the award itself (see the PMP for guidelines as to when these data collection efforts should occur). The recipient will also be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to de-duplicate questions with any ECA surveys 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), 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

In addition to planning for virtual exchange activities if in-person programming is prohibited, 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 $2,100,000, pending the availability of funds. There must be a summary budget, a detailed budget, and a budget narrative. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification. The budget for implementation of capacity building initiatives for the U.S. higher education community should not exceed $150,000 in total.

D.14.a. Allowable costs for the program include the following:
- Personnel
- Fringe Benefits
- Travel
    - Staff and subawardee/participant travel (All air travel must be in compliance

with the Fly America Act)
- o Staff and subawardee/participant per diem (Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at https://www.gsa. gov/travel-resources)
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Contractual
  - o Subawards
  - o Subject matter experts/consultants (if needed)
  - o Web presence/on-line applications/program information and data reporting mechanism management
  - o Other justifiable contractual items directly related to implementing program activities
- Other Direct Costs
  - o Communication costs
  - o Evaluation
  - o Follow-on activities
  - o Meetings and conferences
  - o Monitoring
  - o Network charges
  - o Rent and facilities
  - o OMB Guidance 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F Audits
  - o Publicity
  - o Program materials
  - o Reasonable accommodations
  - o Other justifiable expenses directly related to supporting program activities
- Indirect costs

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, March 11, 2024

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.17.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.17.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.17.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

D.17.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 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.18. Intergovernmental Review of Applications
Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E.   APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1. Review Process
ECA will check that all proposals meet the technical requirements in this solicitation. Proposals that do not meet the guidelines, including those under the eligibility section above or in the PSI, will be ineligible for further review.

All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office before being reviewed by an ECA grant panel and may be reviewed by Public Diplomacy sections overseas, State Department regional bureaus, or other State Department offices, as appropriate. All reviewers, including the ECA grant panels will review any eligible proposals based on the criteria below. Recommended proposals will be reviewed for compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines, and assessed for risk. Final funding decisions are made by the U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Only an ECA Grant Officer has the final authority to issue assistance awards.

E.2. Review Criteria
An ECA grants panel will competitively evaluate all technically eligible applications 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 and ability to achieve program objectives:** Proposals should be original, well-defined, and relevant to ECA's mission. Proposals should have a detailed agenda and work plan that demonstrates your institution's ability to carry out the program and achieve program objectives. The plan should follow the program guidelines described in this solicitation and be reasonable, feasible, and flexible.
2. **Support of DEIA:** Proposals should show how the program and your institution supports ECA's policy on diversity. Proposals should have a clear DEIA plan that is integrated into all aspects of program administration, design, content, and implementation. Proposals should demonstrate how DEIA will enhance the program's goals, objectives, and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated DEIA plan and not simply express general support for the concept of DEIA.
3. **Institutional capacity and institution's record/ability:** Proposals should include the necessary personnel and institutional resources to achieve the program results. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs and responsible fiscal management. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients, including the timely submission of reports, and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

4. **Multiplier effect/impact and follow-on activities:** Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding between countries, including sharing of information and creating long-term institutional and individual linkages. Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity after the ECA supported program ends, ensuring that programs are not isolated events.

5. **Performance monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** Proposals should have a fully developed M&E plan that includes goals, objectives, and indicators. The plan should be feasible and aligned with the M&E section of this solicitation. Proposals should include a realistic learning plan that outlines how your organization plans to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices. All submitted M&E plans will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided at least the required information outlined in the M&E section of this solicitation and demonstrated the applicant's capacity to carry out the M&E plan.

6. **Cost-effectiveness and cost-sharing:** Proposals should keep the overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost share through other private sector support and 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 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:
Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply.

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 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
Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted. All reports must be submitted in a timely manner.   For planning purposes, applicants can expect to provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

1. Performance Progress Reports (PPRs) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual reports shall be due 120 calendar days after the cooperative agreement year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer.) The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic.

2. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: http://www.dpm.psc.gov/. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to SAMS Domestic, in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Cooperative Agreements/Grants.

   In the event you are having difficulty uploading reports and the ILMS help desk is not providing sufficient assistance, please email ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov.

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

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to 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.5. Program Data Requirements

Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with ECA as required. At a minimum, the data must include the name, contact information, and biographic sketch of all subaward contacts, as well as an approximate itinerary of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement.

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Rebecca Johnson, U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Educational Programs, U.S. Study Abroad Branch, ECA/A/S/Q, 202-632-9437, JohnsonRR2@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   December 12, 2023
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State