Educational and Cultural Affairs

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Amendment 2 to FY25 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program

Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017192
Application Deadline: June 30, 2025

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A. **Basic Information**

1. **Overview.**

Funding Opportunity Title	FY25 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0017192
Announcement Type	Amendment 2 to New Cooperative Agreement Announcement
Deadline for Applications	June 30, 2025, 11:59pm Eastern (Washington DC time)
Assistance Listing Number	19.011
Length of Performance Period	36 months
Number of Awards Anticipated	One award
Award Amount	Approximately $16,826,696
Total Available Funding	Approximately $16,826,696, pending availability of funds

Type of Funding	FY25 Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs (ECE) Funds
Funding Instrument Type	Cooperative Agreement
Anticipated Award Date	August 17, 2025

This notice is subject to availability of funding. 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. ECA also reserves the right to make changes to the number of proposed participants or other elements of the program design or implementation, considering the availability of funding or other factors determined by ECA.

Pending satisfactory implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this award for two additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

2. **Executive Summary.**
The U.S. Study Abroad Branch within the Office of Global Educational Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition to administer the FY2025Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program (hereinafter referred to as the "Gilman Program"). The stated intent of the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000, the authorizing legislation for the Gilman Program, is to support U.S. undergraduate students of limited financial means to study outside the United States in order to "broaden the outlook and better prepare such students of demonstrated financial need to assume significant roles in the increasingly global economy." As outlined in legislation, the Gilman Program is open to citizens and nationals of the United States and provides scholarships to enable undergraduate students of limited financial means to pursue credit-bearing academic studies or internships overseas. This NOFO has been amended to add section E.9. Certification Regarding Compliance with 20. U.S.C. 1011f and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements. This NOFO has been amended a second time to update the language in section E.8. Certification Regarding Compliance with applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws.

B. Eligibility

1. **Eligible Applicants.**
The following organizations are eligible to apply:
- U.S. Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations
- U.S. Not-for-profit public and private educational institutions

Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

2. Cost Sharing.

There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this program.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements.

   a. All organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid registration in SAM.gov. Please see *Section E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines* for more information.

   b. Grants or Cooperative Agreements awarded to organizations which do not demonstrate at least four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to $130,000. ECA's Grant Guidelines require that organizations demonstrate at least four years of experience in conducting international exchanges to be eligible for awards exceeding $130,000 in ECA funding. As noted in *Section A. Basic Information*, ECA anticipates issuing one award, for approximately $16,826,696. Therefore, organizations must demonstrate four years of experience in conducting international exchanges in your proposal to be eligible to apply under this competition.

   c. All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, and the PSI; not doing so may result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

   d. All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed line-item budget, and budget narrative.

   e. 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. Program Description

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.

2. Purpose.

The Gilman Program helps to support the United States' national security and economic prosperity by building international competencies and career-ready skills among talented and ambitious American undergraduate students with high financial need through overseas study. Gilman Scholars leverage their experiences abroad to promote American interests in critical sectors such as business, technology, security, law, and energy.

3. Program Specific Guidelines.

The Gilman Program typically provides approximately 3,100 merit-based scholarships of up to $5,000 annually to eligible U.S. undergraduate students to assist with the cost of up to one academic year of credit-bearing study or internship abroad. The Gilman Program funding includes resources dedicated specifically to the John McCain International Scholarship for the Dependents of Military Families (Gilman-McCain Scholarship), which provides approximately 100 scholarships of $5,000 for the children and spouses of active-duty military personnel to study or intern abroad. Approximately 125 selected students (including Gilman and Gilman-McCain Scholars) will also receive up to $3,000 of supplemental funding for the study of critical languages (hereinafter referred to as "Critical Need Language Awards" or "CNLA") while overseas, which include, but are not limited to: Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu. ECA reserves the right to alter or add to this list of languages, including, but not limited to, through support provided under Gilman partnership arrangements. Additionally, approximately 125 selected students (including Gilman and Gilman-McCain Scholars) will receive up to $1,000 of supplemental funding to conduct STEM-related research abroad as part of their study abroad or international internship program.

4. Recipient Responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

A. Notable Activities;
B. Program Planning and Management;
C. Recruitment;
D. Outreach and Marketing;
E. Branding;
F. Application Screening, Selection, and Awarding;
G. Pre-departure and Re-entry Support;
H. Student Monitoring and Programmatic Reporting;
I. Programmatic Monitoring and Evaluation;
J. Financial Oversight and Reporting;
K. Advisor Support and Assistance;
L. Alumni Tracking and Engagement; and
M. Partnership Support.

A. <u>Notable Activities:</u> Develop an innovative strategy for celebrating the Semiquincentennial in (CY) 2026, commonly known as "America250," through Gilman participant and alumni

activities and engagement, partner initiatives, and advisor community activities and outreach.

B. <u>Program Planning and Management:</u> Develop and maintain policies and step-by-step procedures for each key functional component of the administration of the Gilman Program, including but not limited to, outreach and marketing, application review, selection and awarding, student monitoring, participant and alumni events and activities, termination and revocation of awards, and follow-on service projects (detailed below in section H.e.). Additional deliverables and requirements include the items listed below.

    a. In consultation with ECA, create and implement an overall timeline for all major programmatic activities, and develop detailed, quarterly timelines that include key milestones and final deadlines.

    b. Execute program-wide meetings to include a kick-off meeting with ECA and key personnel at the start of the award period to review programmatic and cooperative agreement responsibilities.

    c. Conduct regular meetings in-person or via virtual means with ECA staff and provide ECA with written summaries detailing deadlines or deliverables.

    d. Provide and maintain detailed documentation of all program policies and procedures, including a separate section on emergency management and protocols for review and approval by ECA.

    e. Provide ECA with periodic electronic data uploads of participant statistics for ECA's participant and alumni databases.

    f. Maintain current participant data electronically and in such a manner as to protect personally identifiable information (PII) under all applicable laws, including individual award amounts and fiscal year of funding. Required data fields for the electronic data system include, but are not limited to, the following: first name; middle name; last name; sex; date of birth; contact information (address, phone and email); field of study; home institution; host institution; host country; fiscal year of funding; award amount; duration and dates of program abroad; and home U.S. state and Congressional district.

    g. The FY 2025 Gilman Program award recipient should be prepared to work closely with the FY 2024 Gilman Program award recipient to maintain continuity of programming and operations for the FY 2025 program as required. This would include, but is not limited to, the maintenance and transfer of program, participant, alumni, and advisor data and contacts as needed for monitoring and reporting.

    h. Respond in a timely manner to inquiries about the program from prospective applicants and members of the public, academic institutions, and study abroad organizations.

C. <u>Recruitment:</u> Propose a plan for recruitment that will generate a strong pool of qualified candidates representing the United States. This plan should be tailored to audiences meeting the Gilman and Gilman-McCain eligibility profile. The recruitment plan should be creative, comprehensive, and data-driven, and include a combination of in-person and virtual activities. The recruitment plan will be subject to ongoing coordination and approval by ECA staff. The recruitment plan should include

a. Proposed recruitment materials and activities (i.e. print and online content, social media, videos, conferences, workshops and campus visits, and other in-person outreach events). Materials should explain the purpose of the Gilman Program. As relevant and possible, materials should clearly outline the candidate eligibility and selection criteria.

b. An overall budget with estimated cost breakdowns by key strategy components, such as materials, conference/event engagement

c. A plan detailing proposed student recruitment activities, including travel, by program staff and Gilman Advisor and Alumni Ambassadors. (The Gilman Advisor Ambassador Program is described in section K. The Alumni Ambassadors Program is described under section L).

d. A timeline of proposed conference attendance and anticipated role (i.e. presenter, exhibitor), including deadlines for booth registrations and session proposals, if applicable. ECA's preference is for comprehensive conference engagement that includes, but is not limited to, panel presentations, booth staffing, and meetings with key stakeholders. An ECA staff member may also participate in key conferences; ECA participation is funded separately from the award.

e. A specific Gilman-McCain outreach and recruitment section and budget, including strategic plans for targeted outreach to key stakeholders, such as military-related organizations.

D. <u>Outreach and Marketing:</u> Present a broad outreach and marketing plan that promotes the Gilman Program's purpose, and domestic and international impact to a general audience. This plan should include press and media engagement centered on raising the Gilman Program's profile and demonstrating its innovative practices for supporting American undergraduate students of limited financial means to study abroad and why this support is in the U.S.'s national interest. Additional deliverables and requirements include the items listed below.

a. Compile and announce an annual "Gilman Top Producing Institutions" list that highlights top-sending U.S. colleges and universities by institution size and other categories designated by ECA. Lists may include additional achievements in the following categories (or others as determined by the program office): greatest growth in Gilman Scholarships and those institutions with their first-ever Gilman recipients. Present ECA with a communications plan for the announcement of the list, and work in close coordination with ECA program staff on related media engagement.

b. Dedicate adequate resources to maintain, manage, and further develop an official Gilman website and social media accounts (i.e., Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, X, and YouTube) for the Gilman Program, and closely follow ECA communications and outreach guidance.

c. Draft and prepare for notifications to Members of the U.S. Congress and Governors of U.S. states and of Puerto Rico and U.S. territories, as well as the Mayor of Washington, D.C., about Gilman Scholars in their respective locales.

E. <u>Branding:</u> Ensure that all print and electronic materials (online application, websites, digital resources, brochures, press releases, announcements, etc.) developed for promotional purposes and related to the program comply with ECA's Communications Guidance. The implementing partner must include the U.S. Department of State seal, U.S. flag, and Gilman Program logo prominently and before the implementing partner's organization. The implementing partner must also include the following language at the bottom of printed and electronic materials: "The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by [implementing partner]." All Gilman-related print and electronic materials must be submitted to ECA for approval in advance of publication and distribution. ECA retains copyright use of materials.

F. <u>Application Screening, Selection, and Awarding:</u> Design a national application, selection, and awarding process that produces outstanding scholarship recipients representing the whole of the United States and a wide array of study abroad locations overseas. Special attention should be paid to ensure that, to the extent possible, selected participants represent all U.S. states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories, including rural communities. Special attention should also be paid to ensure that Gilman Scholars are studying or interning abroad in a broad range of fields of study and locations. All other factors being equal, veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces must be given preference in selection. Additional deliverables and requirements include the items listed below.

   a. Establish, maintain, and update an online application system to collect, store, protect, and process data in support of program application and selection cycles. An alternate paper-based application should also be provided for candidates unable to apply online. These paper-based applications, however, must be entered into the online system by implementing partner program staff.

   b. Ensure applicants meet the Gilman Program's eligibility requirements, which include the parameters listed below, noting that ECA can adjust.

   All Gilman Scholars must be:
   o A citizen or national of the United States. Proof of status is required prior to award disbursement;
   o An undergraduate student in good standing at an accredited institution of higher education in the United States (including both two-year and four-year institutions);
   o Receiving a Federal Pell Grant during the time of application or provide proof that they will be receiving a Pell Grant during the term of their study abroad program or internship;
   o Accepted to, or is in the process of applying to, a credit-bearing study abroad or internship program. Proof of program acceptance is required prior to award disbursement;
   o Accepted to, or is in the process of applying to, credit-bearing study abroad programs in a country or location with an overall Travel Advisory Level 1 or 2, according to the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory System. It is

important to note that certain areas within a country or location that has an overall Travel Advisory Level 1 or 2 may be designated within the Travel Advisory as either Level 3 or Level 4; Gilman scholars will not be allowed to participate in programs in these specific areas. Gilman scholars are unable to participate in programs located in a country or location — or an area within a country or location — that is designated as either a Level 3 ("Reconsider travel to") or Level 4 ("Do not travel to").

All Gilman-McCain Scholars must be:
- o A citizen or national of the United States. Proof of status is required prior to award disbursement;
- o An undergraduate student in good standing at an accredited institution of higher education in the United States (including both two-year and four-year institutions);
- o Dependent (child or spouse) of active or activated United States military personnel during the time of application;
- o Recipient of any type of Title IV federal financial aid during the time of application or provide proof that they will be receiving Title IV federal financial aid during their study abroad program or internship;
- o Accepted to, or is in the process of applying to, a credit-bearing study abroad or internship program. Proof of program acceptance is required prior to award disbursement;
- o Accepted to, or is in the process of applying to, credit-bearing study abroad programs in a country or location with an overall Travel Advisory Level 1 or 2, according to the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory System. It is important to note that certain areas within a country or location that has an overall Travel Advisory Level 1 or 2 may be designated within the Travel Advisory as either Level 3 or Level 4; Gilman scholars will not be allowed to participate in programs in these specific areas. Gilman scholars are unable to participate in programs located in a country or location — or an area within a country or location — that is designated as either a Level 3 ("Reconsider travel to") or Level 4 ("Do not travel to").

c. Conduct optional applicant surveys collecting information to assess the effectiveness of outreach and recruitment and other data as identified in consultation with ECA. Share results and analysis with ECA and use them to inform future outreach and recruitment plans.
d. Conduct a technical review of applications for eligibility and completeness.
e. Plan and submit to ECA for approval a transparent, merit-based selection process with clearly identified criteria and a scoring matrix for assessing the Gilman applications. Preference should be given to applicants who are veterans of military service.

f. Actively recruit qualified study abroad experts (they may be U.S. higher education administrators, staff, and faculty) to serve as selection panelists. Provide training materials and resources for panelists on the program purpose and objectives.

g. Convene virtual selection panels to recommend and rank candidates for the Gilman Program, Gilman-McCain Program, Critical Need Language Award (CNLA), and the STEM Supplemental Award.

h. Present the final recommended participants and alternates to ECA for approval, providing an overall analysis of the results of the selection panels, including the number of participants by host country, home state, institution type, field of study, and other categories as requested by ECA.

i. Ensure that individual award amounts do not exceed the amount requested by the applicant while covering as much of the applicant's unmet need as possible within programmatic parameters.

j. Notify applicants of their status using ECA-approved notification letters. Notify U.S. higher education faculty and administrators that support Gilman Program applicants on their campuses (hereinafter referred to as "Gilman Advisors") of their applicants' status.

k. Establish mechanisms to confirm that participants provide evidence of international insurance coverage (to cover illness, accident, medical evacuation, and repatriation of remains), U.S. citizenship (or certificate of non-citizen U.S. nationality), Pell Grant status, study abroad/international internship program enrollment status, and registration in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) before funding is disbursed.

l. Applicants may propose supplemental health and safety support services and tools for Gilman Scholars while on program.

m. Consult with ECA in the development and maintenance of terms and conditions and other rules and regulations for participants and ensure that participants receive and sign the terms and conditions document and any other program-required documentation before funding is disbursed.

G. <u>Pre-departure and Re-entry Support</u>: Provide a detailed plan of virtual pre-departure and re-entry support for all Gilman Scholars. The plan should include a mix of static and interactive content to prepare Gilman Scholars for their time overseas as U.S. citizen ambassadors, as well as supporting their return to the United States and how to amplify and maximize their international experience. Provide comprehensive, virtual pre-departure orientation materials, covering health (including mental health), safety and security, adaptation strategies, the role of U.S. citizen ambassadors, and program-specific information prior to departure. Pre-departure materials should emphasize the Gilman Program as a U.S. Department of State program and encourage Gilman Scholars to engage with U.S. embassies and consulates overseas, where applicable. Gilman Scholars should also receive information on counterintelligence awareness. Additionally, develop innovative and thorough virtual re-entry materials on leadership development, professional skills development, and advancing the impact to the Gilman Scholar's home community. Make pre-departure and re-entry

tools, templates, and materials available to program participants and alumni on an ongoing basis.

H. <u>Student Monitoring and Reporting:</u> Provide a comprehensive participant assessment and monitoring strategy. The strategy should include a health and welfare monitoring plan for ensuring the safety and security of Gilman Scholars abroad, including mechanisms for confirming their arrival in country. The plan should also include verification of the completion of the terms of their scholarship and information on how the implementing partner will monitor and communicate with Gilman Scholars throughout the duration of their program abroad beyond basic emergency coordination. As part of the performance monitoring and evaluation strategy, ECA expects the implementing partner to measure participants' growth and acquisition of new skills and abilities.

    a. Provide ECA with weekly student monitoring reports capturing the arrivals, departures, and status of all Gilman Scholars within three months of their program start date. Reports must be organized by U.S. Department of State's world regions and include the student's name, home institution, host institution, field of study, study abroad/international internship program administrator, program dates, host location (city, country), email address, and local phone number (if available).

    b. Maintain regular communication with Gilman Scholars overseas and provide Gilman Scholars with access to 24/7 telephone contact for use during emergency situations. Respond to all general inquiries within 24 hours. Inform ECA at the first sign of an emergency or participant crisis, and work in consultation with ECA to resolve each situation in a timely manner. Consult with ECA regarding responses to press queries related to emergency situations.

    c. When necessary, prepare appropriate documentation for ECA approval for the termination or cancellation of a Gilman award or alumni status, and take appropriate action, to recoup funds that may have been previously distributed to the participant, per the Gilman Program terms and conditions. Notify ECA on the status and resolution of award and alumni status terminations or revocations. (Note: Termination or cancellation is most frequently seen when locations overseas have travel advisories levels that increase and make it unsafe to remain in country.)

    d. Arrange for and budget for optional testing of oral language skills for the recipients of the Critical Need Language Award upon return. Provide ECA with reporting on cumulative results.

    e. Within six months of their return home, all Gilman recipients must complete follow-on projects that promote study abroad and/or the Gilman Program within their home institution or community. The implementing partner will work closely with ECA to develop mechanisms to track and report on these activities after each term. Follow-on service projects may include outreach to peers on one's home campus or other activities that increase awareness of the career-ready skills and international competencies gained through study abroad and/or the Gilman Program with American audiences.

I. Programmatic Monitoring and Evaluation: Provide a performance monitoring and evaluation plan that includes assessments of program-specific aspects, such as logistical arrangements and program components, as well as overall outcomes for participants and host communities. Additional deliverables and requirements include the items listed below.

    a. Implement follow-up surveys with prospective individual recipients (or their respective home institutions) that declined Gilman scholarships to analyze student trends and make program recommendations. All collected data must be retained for five years.

    b. Implement program surveys to participants to assess their growth and acquisition of career-ready skills and international competencies, including separate assessments of recipients of supplemental language and STEM awards. Provide ECA with reporting on cumulative results, including the impact of follow-on service projects.

    c. Propose a plan for collecting, analyzing, and reporting outcome data (including multiplier effect) from Gilman alumni to measure the longer-term impacts of the Gilman Program, in coordination with ECA's Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Innovation (MELI) unit.

Note this monitoring and evaluation process is in addition to MODE Framework reporting (see section 6. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)).

J. Financial Oversight and Reporting: Provide thorough and robust financial oversight and reporting for each component of the Gilman Program. The implementing partner must comply with ECA protocols on frequency of financial reporting and processes. Decisions on the use of unused funds must be made in collaboration with ECA to enhance and implement the overall goals of the Gilman Program. Additionally, the implementing partner should track and provide information on Gilman Scholars' study abroad programming and costs to better inform program policies and scholarship implementation. They should also ensure the cost-effectiveness of program implementation via innovative measures. Additional deliverables and requirements include the items listed below.

    I. Manage award disbursements for participants via direct deposits to participant U.S. bank accounts but provide the option for students without bank accounts to receive their funding through another mechanism.

    J. Create and maintain an overall budget for the recruitment and outreach plan with estimated cost breakdowns by key strategy components such as materials, conference attendance, and campus visits, as well as a section dedicated to Gilman-McCain outreach and recruitment.

    K. Consult ECA on student award terminations, revocations, and recouped funds, and provide documentation of these actions to ECA as needed.

    L. Audit internal functions, systems, and controls as necessary, and report any irregularities if necessary or required

    M. Ensure that participants comply with the Fly America Act when using Gilman Program funds to purchase international plane tickets.

K. Advisor Support and Assistance: Present an innovative plan for developing, engaging, and informing an extensive network of Gilman Advisors from higher education institutions across the United States. Gilman Advisors are U.S. higher education professionals that assist students in the Gilman application process and have a formal role in certifying their financial aid status and proposed study and intern abroad programs. Though Gilman Advisors come from a wide variety of administrative and academic departments, many work in study abroad, financial aid, and fellowship advising and are critical in reaching and supporting students on campus. Additional deliverables and requirements include the items listed below.

   a. Implement and oversee the Gilman Advisor Ambassadors Program, which selects 15-20 outstanding Gilman Advisors to support the Gilman Program, including training and assisting the broader Gilman advisor community across the United States. Gilman Advisor Ambassadors should represent the breadth of the U.S. higher education system and serve for one to two years. Gilman Advisor Ambassadors should also serve as a consultancy body for the Gilman Program, providing feedback and recommendations ahead of proposed policy changes and/or other significant program updates.
   b. Develop a plan for virtual and in-person Gilman Advisor engagement and training, including in-person workshops, informational webinars, interactive panels, and networking opportunities to increase the awareness and understanding of the Gilman Program. Where possible, virtual events should be recorded and shared online to reach the widest possible audience.
   c. Provide social media toolkits and other resources to all Gilman Advisors ahead of open application periods and survey advisors on what additional resources may meet the greatest collective need. Ensure that all advisor outreach and support materials are accessible online or can be mailed, as needed. Social media toolkits should include infographics and content at key periods during the academic year, including agreed-upon industry conferences and International Education Week.
   d. Maintain a system to register and update Gilman Advisors assigned to specific U.S. higher education institutions. Allow for advisors to sign-up to serve as certifying Study Abroad or Financial Aid Advisors or as non-certifying Advisors. Upon registration, they should also have the option to "opt in" to having their names appearing on a publicly available list.

L. Alumni Tracking and Engagement: Provide a comprehensive alumni engagement strategy and timeline. The strategy should include a plan for continued contact with Gilman alumni to ensure that they are organized as an alumni community, involved in outreach efforts, and offered opportunities for on-going professional development and engagement to expand on the knowledge and skills they acquired on the exchange program. Additional deliverables and requirements include the items listed below.

   a. Provide oversight of Gilman alumni activities to include, but are not limited to:
       o maintaining a database of all Gilman alumni;
       o encouraging alumni to register on the U.S. Department of State's International Exchange Alumni website (https://alumni.state.gov/);

- creating and maintaining an online platform for Gilman alumni to network, share resources, and build community;
- creating and/or sharing networking and professional development opportunities for Gilman alumni;
- implementing a strategy for alumni engagement, including on social media;
- facilitating a Gilman mentoring program that will connect current Gilman Scholars with Gilman alumni;
- implementing an alumni survey; and
- providing reports to ECA on all alumni activities.

b. Maintain close coordination with ECA on operationalizing Executive Order 13750 granting alumni of the Gilman Program Non-Competitive Eligibility (NCE) for federal hiring, including issuance of ECA-provided certificates to all program alumni who have successfully completed their program. Ensure that applicants, participants, and alumni are aware of the benefits of NCE. Periodically share NCE job opportunities provided by ECA and/or other USG entities with Gilman alumni.

c. Prepare and distribute digital badges once Gilman alumni have completed their required follow-on service projects.

d. To build upon the study abroad experiences and further develop professional knowledge and competencies of Gilman alumni on topics of U.S. foreign policy and national security relevance, the applicant should develop an alumni engagement plan that includes both virtual and in-person programming on themes critical to U.S. foreign policy.

e. Provide ECA with a plan and timeline for the Gilman Alumni Ambassador Program, which selects recently returned outstanding Gilman alumni to support the Gilman Program, including recruitment, outreach, and marketing.
   - Manage the application and selection process of the Gilman Alumni Ambassadors, in close consultation with ECA.
   - Plan and execute an Alumni Ambassadors' training in close consultation with ECA.
   - Provide ongoing support to Alumni Ambassadors, including the provision of travel grants to those traveling in support of the program to campuses and/or conferences.

M. Partnership Support: Provide an implementation plan for the management and development of partnerships which leverage and maximize U.S. taxpayer dollars and provide additional value to current students, alumni, advisors, and other key stakeholders. Additional deliverables and requirements include the items listed below.
   a. Implement the Gilman Program's public-private partnerships and government partnerships in accordance with U.S. government rules and regulations.
   b. Manage and provide administrative support for the Gilman Program's in-kind partnerships with educational organizations and government entities providing seminars, trainings, and professional development resources to the Gilman scholar and alumni community.
   c. Manage the outreach, recruitment, selection, and awarding of partner-sponsored Gilman scholarships within the framework of the larger Gilman selection process, in consultation with ECA.

    d.   Provide partners and ECA with financial and performance reports highlighting the results of their collaboration with the Gilman Program.

5. Goals and Objectives.

The mission of the Gilman Program is to:

- Develop a generation of future American leaders who have the international networks and skills to advance U.S. national security and economic prosperity.
- Expand the U.S. student population that studies and interns abroad, helping more Americans to gain the professional skills, language abilities, and global competencies needed for successful careers.
- Broaden the destinations where U.S. students study and intern abroad, in locations critical to U.S. national security and economic interests.

6. 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.

The proposal must 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
  - o Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities
    - ▪ E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries

- o 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
  - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)
- 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
  - o Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
    - E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
    - E4.1.03: Number of ECA-supported international scholarships provided
- 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. While ECA recommends the applicant use the PMP format provided, this is not a requirement. 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 . 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. 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; 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.
  - 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 outcomes 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.

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
Proposals should include information within the program narrative section(s) 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.

Nonmandatory Use of the Qualtrics MODE Survey Builder Data Collection System
ECA has created a guided tool (the MODE Survey Builder) within the Qualtrics survey platform for ECA implementing partners to generate surveys to facilitate the seamless collection and reporting of MODE Framework data. The MODE Survey Builder offers implementing partners a guided workflow that will generate a ready-to-send MODE survey, allows the addition of custom survey questions, and offers a standard report template for a quick overview of survey results that can be submitted in MyGrants (see section below) to fulfill RPM Reporting Requirements. Use of the Qualtrics survey platform can be utilized at no cost to implementing partners. Additional information about the MODE Survey Builder can be found here: https://app.box.com/s/jjr98hmx6deorxj3lwgaxjrwdfec2r91 and here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jus4fRqOTcM. You can propose use of an alternate survey tool or use the MODE Survey Builder, but if you are utilizing the MODE Survey Builder, you must indicate such in your proposal.

MyGrants RPM Reporting Requirements
MyGrants 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 MyGrants 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 MyGrants RPM. The data stored in the MyGrants 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.

7. Cost Share.
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.

8. Freedom and Democracy Guidelines.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

9. 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. Proposals should demonstrate the organization's capacity to provide innovative options for virtual activities to substitute for in-person engagement for program participants. Organizations should consider how they will implement virtual exchange activities, given the potential limits to internet access from participants in some locations and while continuing to advance foreign policy objectives and achieve lasting benefits for U.S. citizens and international participants.

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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. Substantial Involvement.
In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring, as follows:
1. Program print and online materials, highlight stories, and interview requests prior to publication or completion.
2. Official program web presence and social media platforms and content.
3. Program materials, including all Request for Proposals (RFP) and public/recipient materials.
4. Selection and notification process for all open competitions.

D. Application Contents and Format

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals.

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which contains guidelines for proposal preparation.

1. **Budget Format.**
Applicants must submit a budget (SF-424A), detailed line-item budget, and a budget narrative.

Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

2. **Content of Application.**
Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for information about the application and formatting guidelines.

E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. **Address to Request Application Package.**
The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Grants.gov website at https://www.grants.gov or from ECA website at https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding.

2. **Department of State Contacts**
For questions about this announcement, contact: Theresa Gagnon, U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Educational Programs, ECA/A/S/Q, (202) 632-6339, GagnonTF@state.gov.

All correspondence with ECA concerning this solicitation 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 deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

The terms and conditions published in this solicitation are binding and may not be modified by any ECA representative. Explanatory information provided by ECA that contradicts published language will not be binding.

3.   Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM.gov).

Required Registrations
All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov.

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. An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from this NOFO.

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

*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.***

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 prior to registering in SAM.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain a current registration in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting is completed on any issued award. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:
https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration
Exemptions
An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See 2 CFR 25.110 for a full list of exemptions.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a

justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

4. Required Registration with MyGrants.

All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's MyGrants system by accessing https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com and clicking the "create an account" link. MyGrants 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 MyGrants 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/.

5. Submission Instructions.

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.

Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures

Eligible organizations should follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (https://www.grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants.

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/applicants/applicant-registration

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/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants

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

6.   Submission Dates and Times.

Application Deadline Date
Monday, June 30, 2025.

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

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 Grants.gov 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 the Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting https://grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal (https://www.grants.gov) 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.

7. **Funding Restrictions for this Announcement.**
    f. **Funding Restrictions for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)**
        None of the funds awarded resulting from this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be made available for subawards, direct financial support, or otherwise used to provide any payment or transfer to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

8. **Certification Regarding Compliance with applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws**
    If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this NOFO will be within the United States, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:

    1) Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code and;

    2) It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

9. **Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements.**
    Applicants are advised that institutions of higher education (IHEs) must certify the following at the time of award, and that this certification requirement must be included in any subaward agreements to IHEs:

- Its compliance in all respects with section 1011f of title 20, United States Code, and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements is material for purposes of section 3729 of title 31, United States Code, and for receipt of appropriate Federal grant funds.

10. **Other Submission Requirements.**

a. Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov.

b. All proposals must contain a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed line-item budget, and budget narrative.

c. 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, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Applicants should also identify what proportion of their time will be used in support of the program. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions.

d. Intergovernmental Review of Applications
Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

F. Application Review Information

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. Applications may also 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.

Proposals recommended by an ECA grant panel will be reviewed for compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines, and assessed for risk. Final funding decisions are made by the ECA's Assistant Secretary. Only an ECA Grant Officer has the final authority to issue assistance awards.

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 review.

    a. **Quality of the program idea:** Proposals should be original, well-defined, and relevant to ECA's mission.

    b. **Program planning:** Proposals should have a detailed agenda and work plan that demonstrates your institution's ability to carry out the program. The plan should follow the program guidelines described in this solicitation and should be likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results.

    c. **Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should include the necessary personnel and institutional resources to achieve the program results. The organization has expertise in exchange programs and the proposal demonstrates it has the internal controls in place to manage federal funds. 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.

    d. **Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity after the ECA supported program ends, ensuring that programs are not isolated events.

    e. **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.

    f. **Cost-effectiveness and Cost share:** 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.

  3. Qualification Information in SAM.gov.

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 (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov.

Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 CFR 200.206, the Department will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

4. 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 an authorized Grants Officer in 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 a Grants Officer and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer (as identified in the application) for review and countersignature. The recipient may only start incurring project expenses beginning on the start date shown on the fully signed award document.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding.

Unsuccessful applicants:
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.

Payment Method:
Payments under this award will be made through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS).

5. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

a. 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.

The Department of State will review and consider proposals for funding pursuant to this NOFO in accordance with OMB guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, including the following:
- [Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#) (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
  - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
  - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),

- o Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
- o Terminating agreements pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT

- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION

- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)

- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY

- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS

- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

b. Reporting.

Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The FAA 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:

a. **Performance Progress Reports (PPRs)** shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual, quarterly, or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. All reports and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this award in MyGrants.

b. The **Federal Financial Reports** (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: https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/post-award-reporting-forms. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the recipient must upload the approved report to MyGrants, in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the recipient's eligibility for future awards.

c. Required **MODE data** (see Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation section) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. MODE data reporting shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. The frequency of these reports

will be determined by ECA/P/MELI and the Program Officer. Either a standard report template (if using the MODE Survey Builder) or aggregate data and the raw data file (if Recipient uses their own survey platform) must be uploaded by the Recipient as an RPM Performance Report under the corresponding record for this award in MyGrants.

d. A **final program and financial report** no more than 120 days after the period of performance of the award ends or termination of the award.

e. **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.

6. Other Information

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