



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 the FY 2025 U.S. Exchange Alumni Network and Capacity Building Program

Funding Opportunity Number: **DFOP0017196**

Application Deadline: **June 30, 2025**

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A. Basic Information

Funding Opportunity Title	FY 2025 U.S. Exchange Alumni Network and Capacity Building Program
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0017196
Announcement Type	Amendment 2 to New Cooperative Agreement
Deadline for Applications	June 30, 2025 11:59pm Eastern (Washington, DC time)
Assistance Listing Number	19.452
Length of Performance Period	18 months
Number of Awards Anticipated	One Award
Award Amount	Approximately \$1,300,000
Total Available Funding	\$1,300,000 pending availability of funds

Type of Funding	FY 2025 Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs (ECE) Funds
Funding Instrument Type	Cooperative Agreement
Anticipated Award Date	September 1, 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.

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.

1. Executive Summary.

The Office of Alumni Affairs (ECA/P/A) of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for the administration of the FY 2025 U.S. Exchange Alumni Network and Capacity Building Program. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations that meet the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to conduct programs in support of expanding professional development opportunities for U.S. citizen alumni of U.S. government-sponsored people-to-people exchange programs, to include organizing and implementing career development seminars, a small grants program, and an alumni regional ambassadors fellowship program. The U.S. Exchange Alumni Network and Capacity Building Program champions the Administration's America First foreign policy.

The career development series will be composed of approximately 3-4 in-person seminars, and a minimum of 4 virtual professional development webinars supporting the Administration's commitment to build a strong American workforce through professional networks and job skills training.

Each in-person professional development seminar will take place over the course of 2-3 days in various cities around the United States and host approximately 50 attendees. One large seminar must be hosted in Washington, DC for approximately 100-150 alumni. An in-person seminar should make full use of the host city, including site visits to local organizations in industries that fuel the American economy, and networking opportunities with industry and government professionals, when appropriate, and members of the local alumni community.

Virtual professional development resources will include live, synchronous sessions over the course of the cooperative agreement's period of performance and host approximately 250 alumni. Each live session should last approximately 1-2 hours and include opportunities for alumni to engage with speakers, HR representatives, and one another through breakout rooms,

Q&A sessions, recruiting activities, or networking events. The recipient will also be responsible for housing and promoting newly recorded webinars and previously produced virtual professional development content for U.S. alumni to access online at anytime.

ECA will determine the types of seminars in advance in coordination with the recipient, approving thematic proposals from the recipient that further the goals of the cooperative agreement. Applicants will strive to ensure that each seminar, whether virtual or in-person, provides a similar experience and level of engagement for the attendees.

The small grants program will target U.S. citizen alumni to provide opportunities for them to use the skills, knowledge, and networks gained on their exchange programs to carry out community projects that make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous, both in the United States and overseas. The program will be administered as an open competition, with alumni teams submitting project proposals that address certain themes or areas of interest, as determined by ECA. Applicants should expect to implement one round of the small grants program for each year of the cooperative agreement. Potential U.S. foreign policy priority themes may include, but are not limited to, deterring illegal migration, combatting illegal drug use, promoting the English language, and support for U.S. constitutional values such as freedom of speech and religion.

The U.S. Exchange Alumni Fellowship Program will support a minimum of nine (9) U.S. citizen Exchange Alumni across the United States to serve as regional citizen ambassadors to support outreach to U.S. Exchange Alumni in their communities, build the U.S. citizen alumni network, and spread awareness of the resources and opportunities available through ECA/P/A and Department of State.

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. Section E.2 has also been amended to update program officer contact information.

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. 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 \$1,000,000. 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 FY 2025 U.S. Exchange Alumni Network and Capacity Building Program will deepen the U.S. Department of State's engagement with U.S. citizens who are alumni of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs ("U.S. exchange alumni") and support U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives.

3. Program Specific Guidelines.

Background: ECA/P/A leads and coordinates efforts to engage and maintain relationships with alumni of U.S. government-sponsored people-to-people exchanges. With millions of exchange alumni worldwide, including over 500,000 U.S. citizens, ECA is committed to providing resources to sustain engagement with and harness the energy, enthusiasm, and expertise of this influential audience who contribute to the Administration's goal of making America safer, stronger and more prosperous. Working closely with U.S. Department of State regional bureaus and U.S. embassies worldwide, ECA/P/A supports alumni programs that are strategic and designed to reinforce U.S. foreign policy objectives and enhance the effectiveness of USG exchange programs over the long term.

Key to this effort is deepening ECA engagement with U.S. citizens who have participated in USG-funded and facilitated international exchange programs to strengthen their connection with their home communities throughout the United States and the Department of State, reinforce their understanding of their status as part of the exchange alumni community, and expand their professional networks both at home and abroad.

In recognition of the size and influence of this group of alumni, ECA/P/A has initiated several programs in recent years to engage U.S. citizen alumni. These programs include the Career Connections professional development series, the Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund small grants competition, and the U.S. Exchange Alumni Fellowship program which are the subjects of this NOFO.

This cooperative agreement seeks to build upon prior successes of ECA/P/A's engagement with U.S. alumni by offering professional development opportunities online and in different regions of the United States, providing funding opportunities for alumni to build on their exchange experience through small grants and acting as regional alumni ambassadors, and by enabling alumni to share their experiences through public outreach, and via traditional and social media.

Goals: The mission of ECA/P/A is to advance U.S. foreign policy by means of robust alumni programs. ECA/P/A engages American and international alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs to develop the leadership capacity and networks necessary to pursue and protect U.S. interests. Through the FY 2025 U.S. Exchange Alumni Network and Capacity Building Program, ECA/P/A aims to:

1. Strengthen U.S. Department of State ties with U.S. citizen alumni by offering opportunities that allow them to expand upon their exchange experiences and use the skills they developed abroad to support initiatives that align American interests.

2. Provide U.S alumni with information, resources, and networks that will allow them to leverage skills and experiences gained through their exchanges to help America prosper and gain access to vital global markets.
3. Reinforce existing alumni program identities and build a sense of common identity among past participants of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs, in order to more effectively use their connections to strengthen the U.S. brand and status overseas.
4. Support alumni-driven initiatives that address shared global challenges and promote mutual understanding between the United States and countries around the world as outlined in the Fulbright-Hays Act.

To date, ECA/P/A has offered fifteen in-person seminars and numerous virtual professional development series, reaching over 1,500 alumni. Seminar topics have included pathways to careers in the federal government, careers in international affairs, opportunities for higher education, sharing the alumni story, and resume building.

Additionally, ECA/P/A has to date offered three rounds of small grants, funding over 270 projects and reaching more than 450 alumni. Grant themes have included media literacy, fostering alumni network development, building community through language, arts, and technology, and other topics. Themes for grant competitions are decided by ECA in collaboration with U.S. Department of State stakeholders.

Professional Development Seminars, Networking, and Career Opportunities:

“Seminars” are defined as a set of learning, leadership, and networking activities for exchange alumni, focused on building professional development and skills training. The seminars should focus on how alumni can leverage cross-cultural skills, language competencies, or international knowledge gained on their exchange programs to succeed in the local and global economy. Each seminar will draw on expert speakers and trainers, promote group discussions, and foster networking among the participants, local alumni, and speakers. While alumni early in their careers may benefit most from these sessions, and are the principal audience for these activities, the award recipient may seek to engage mid-career and senior level alumni, whether through opportunities for mentorship, networking sessions, as presenters/speakers, or through professional development topics relevant to their needs.

During the period of performance of this award, the recipient will conduct multiple seminars in different cities across the United States, and each seminar should draw upon the local community to inform the selection of topics, venue, speakers, and participants. Every seminar should provide opportunities for networking, resume reviews, and headshots and may include job or opportunity fairs, mentorship programs, closed social media groups, or other professional development activities where feasible. Virtual webinars and courses may cover similar topics and should strive to provide opportunities for networking and mentorship, while bringing

together a wider range of participants and/or engaging participants following in-person activities with further professional development opportunities.

Applicants should propose to hold approximately 3-4 in person seminars, with a target of approximately 50 participants for regional in-person seminars, 100-150 for the annual seminar based in Washington, DC, and a minimum of 250 participants annually for virtual sessions. A minimum of \$75,000 of the total award amount should go towards seminar production costs which may include venue rental, AV, travel and lodging support for speakers and alumni attendees, speaker honoraria, group meals, local transportation for participants, print materials and event branded products. This minimum does not include staff and non-participant support costs associated with the award recipient's implementation of the program.

In-person seminars taking place in different regions of the United States will be chosen in consultation with ECA. For in-person activities, double occupancy lodging, some meals and refreshments, and incidental travel costs will be covered for each participant traveling to the host city. Extra consideration will be given to the recruitment of participants resident in the host city/surrounding region and not in need of travel or lodging. Single occupancy lodging, transportation, some meals and refreshments, and other travel expenses will be covered for each presenter. Extra consideration will be given to the recruitment of local presenters who will not need lodging or travel.

Virtual webinar topics and speakers will be selected in coordination with ECA/P/A. The recipient will be responsible for the creation of virtual content and the management of previously created content on online learning platforms. The recipient will not produce new asynchronous professional development or topical course content for exchange alumni through this cooperative agreement.

In close coordination with ECA/P/A, the recipient should be prepared to develop and implement a recruitment strategy, oversee application submissions, and propose a review process for professional development programming. The online application process will be managed by the recipient, with ECA/P/A approving the final slate of seminar participants. The recipient is expected to manage overall program logistics before, during, and after the seminars with substantive input and guidance from ECA/P/A. The recipient is encouraged to, but not required to, work with relevant local organizations in the cities where in-person seminars occur to assist with logistics, recruitment and programmatic development.

Small Grant Program:

The recipient will conduct a small grants open competition of up to \$10,000 per selected project for any eligible U.S. citizen alumnus/a of a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program. Alumni can propose projects that build on their exchange experiences in support of ECA and U.S. foreign policy goals. To promote collaboration and alumni network-building, projects should be

submitted by teams of at least two alumni, with a U.S. citizen alumnus or alumna as the primary team lead. U.S. citizen alumni may partner with foreign exchange alumni to lead a project. Project activities can take place in the United States or overseas and should multiply the effects of participants' exchange experience by positively impacting communities in the United States and around the world. All projects should respond to specific Administration priorities, with themes to be identified and approved in coordination with ECA/P/A.

At least \$400,000 of the total award amount should be granted out to alumni via the small grants program. Candidates should propose a timeline for implementing the small grant program and plan to implement at least one small grant cycle during the award period of performance. Applicants should, however, demonstrate flexibility in the frequency of running a small grants cycle more than once per year, depending on policy priorities, available funding, and other current events.

In close coordination with ECA/P/A, the recipient should be prepared to develop the grant management process, oversee application submissions, propose a review process, oversee the transfer of funds, and implement virtual performance monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans for small grants for projects taking place in the United States and countries around the world. Recipients should also be prepared to design and host a virtual orientation, grants monitoring meetings, and a virtual showcase of successful small grants projects, demonstrating how these projects benefit the American people.

After the recipient screens applications to verify that all requirements have been met by applicants, ECA/P/A and the award recipient will review all qualifying proposals and hold a grants panel to review and recommend projects for funding. ECA/P/A will coordinate with both embassies abroad and domestic Department of State offices for comments on relative projects and make the final selection of approved projects.

Alumni Regional Fellowship Program:

U.S. Exchange Alumni Fellows act as regional citizen ambassadors to promote exchange alumni opportunities offered by the U.S. government in general and ECA/P/A specifically and develop alumni networks throughout the United States. Through a competitive application process a minimum of nine fellows will be selected to represent one of nine regions in the United States where they are expected to reside during the 10-month fellowship period. One fellow who will be called the DC fellow will be based in Washington, DC and may have increased responsibilities. Fellows are expected to contribute on average 10 hours a week during their fellowship period to build community and develop in-person and virtual engagements for alumni across USG-sponsored exchange programs living in their designated region. Selected fellows should receive a stipend for their time serving as a fellow and have access to funds to support hosting and traveling to in person events in their region.

A minimum of \$80,000 of the total award amount should be contributed towards fellowship related expenses such as fellow stipends, event hosting funds, regional fellow email domains,

travel, lodging and per diem for a 3-5 day fellows trip to Washington, DC. This cost does not include award recipients' staff and non-participant support costs associated with the implementation of this program. The award recipient should provide virtual orientation, periodic check-ins, professional development and activities such as guest speakers on foreign policy and international exchange careers, and ongoing training and support throughout the fellowship period. The recipient should also prepare a 3-5 day professional development trip to Washington, DC for the cohort of fellows. Funds from this award should cover all fellows' travel, lodging, and per diem costs associated with this trip.

Participants: "Participants" are defined as U.S. citizen alumni of any U.S. government-sponsored and U.S. government-facilitated exchange program and will be selected using merit as the principal criteria.

The recipient will seek to build upon the experiences, connections, and knowledge that alumni gained through their exchanges by designing programming to meet their needs. In addition, the recipient will work to empower participants to share their international exchange experiences more broadly, through storytelling, photos, and public speaking, via the traditional media, social media and personal networks in cooperation with ECA/P/A.

Candidates shall agree that all private data related to alumni, including name, email address, and other demographic information, are only to be used for Department of State related activity as described in this notice of funding opportunity. ECA/P/A maintains a database of Exchange Alumni contact information and will support the recipient's lead role in recruiting participants for all activities stipulated under the final cooperative agreement.

Organizational Capacity: Applicant organizations must demonstrate their capacity for conducting educational and cultural exchanges, including managing all logistics (flights for fellows, lodging, per diem, transport, etc.), supporting exchange alumni engagement activities, and providing substantive programming for up-and-coming leaders.

Applicants should illustrate in their proposals the breadth of their experience working in alumni engagement and a record of flexibility and adaptability in programming under short timelines or challenging conditions. Proposals should include concrete examples in which the organization has responded quickly to rapidly evolving circumstances, including, if possible, examples that demonstrate the ability to recruit participants from a varied and geographically dispersed alumni community.

In addition, applicants must demonstrate the breadth of their experience working with youth (ages 18-35) and emerging leaders, including professional development programming, virtual engagement, and the development of action plans and small grant opportunities. Applicant organizations must demonstrate the ability to oversee technical logistics for a competitive small grants program with a significant international component, provide resources for alumni to draw upon when developing strong proposals, and facilitate a transparent process for selecting

competitive proposals that include U.S. Department of State representation. Applicants should explain their awards management process, including identification of an online system that will be used for the lifecycle of nomination and grants. The proposed process must also include a robust virtual performance monitoring and evaluation plan that will enable the Department of State to measure impact following the term of the cooperative agreement. Applicants should also demonstrate the ability to responsibly transfer and monitor funds for projects taking place in countries around the world.

Partner Organizations: Applicants should provide examples of organizations and individuals with whom they would collaborate and describe previous U.S. government cooperative agreement activities, if applicable. Proposals should include an engagement strategy advancing ECA/P/A's core mission, to advance U.S. foreign policy and strengthen American influence through alumni engagement between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. Through partnerships, we strengthen alumni programs and networks while building a lifelong relationship with the Exchange Alumni community to support a safer, stronger, and more prosperous United States.

In addition to this engagement strategy, proposals should include a hypothetical professional development seminar and provide a proposed plan for developing the program, with examples of organizations or individuals upon whom the applicant would rely on to develop the most appropriate substantive aspects of the program design. This capability is particularly important for the in-person Professional Development Seminars, in which local partners and input is vital to the success of the project.

Program Timeline: The cooperative agreement will begin on or before September 30, 2025, with program activities beginning around January 1, 2026. The award period will be approximately 18 months in duration and shall cover all aspects of program planning, professional development activities, small grants program, and the regional fellowship program for U.S. citizen alumni. Applicants should submit an engagement strategy describing their concept and propose a timeline for the year, including potential seminar dates and planning milestones. Applicants should provide a sample outline for a hypothetical seminar, a timeline for implementing the small grants competition and alumni regional fellows program.

All award activities, including professional development seminars, grant competition activities, and alumni regional fellowship activities, must be completed prior to the anticipated end date of the award, March 31, 2027. Applicants should propose specific seminar dates, a timeline for alumni regional fellowship activities, and key small grant benchmarks, but the exact timing may be altered through the mutual agreement of the Department of State and the award recipient based on the flexible, rapid-response approach preferred.

ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal project configurations, budgets, seminars, number and size of small grants, and all program participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

4. Recipient Responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

1. Develop and execute a communications strategy that strengthens alumni connections with the Department of State and provide a timeline for participants with program materials and logistical information prior to each seminar. Create a social media campaign that aligns with ECA/P/A's Outreach Strategy and branding guidelines that will run prior to and during each program to highlight the program topics or areas of focus and disseminate alumni stories. Use photos, video, and other tools to create shareable content.
2. Create and use a program-related domain (such as "USAlumni.com") for all email communications, social media, and website platforms. Adhere to both ECA bureau communications guidance and ECA/P/A office communications strategy and branding guidelines for all communications.
3. Manage logistical arrangements and fees, including professional development seminar site selection and alumni fellows contract(s), arranging all technical equipment, staffing, travel, insurance, ground transportation, accommodations, group meals, and seminar organization for all participants.
4. Build and manage an online platform to receive and review alumni applications for programs under this cooperative agreement including, Career Connections professional development seminars, Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund small grants competition, and the U.S. Exchange Alumni fellowship program.
5. Develop and implement a plan to monitor the participants' safety and well-being while traveling to and from program activities and creating opportunities for participants to share potential issues and resolve them promptly.
6. Develop and implement a plan to address misconduct and to identify and resolve conflicts involving alumni participating in programs funded by this cooperative agreement and ensuring that ECA/P/A is made aware of any conflicts or misconduct.
7. Make proper arrangements for participants' religious observances and dietary needs.
8. Conduct an orientation for program participants (seminar attendees, regional fellows, and small grant team leads) prior to the start of their program activities. Orientation should reinforce alumni connections with the Department of State.
9. Research, design, and plan professional development seminar and fellows training curriculum and activities to develop the participants' knowledge and skill base for the professional development activities presented.
10. Identify speakers, trainers, and local business contacts to assist in the facilitation of each seminar and follow-on activities.
11. Develop appropriate follow-on activities, such as webinars, mentorship programs, and other opportunities.

12. Research and identify potential organizations or locations for off-site visits in relation to the themes of the seminar.
13. Connect selected alumni fellows with local organizations and contacts, as appropriate to support their local engagements.
14. Facilitate a small grants program for U.S. exchange alumni, including developing the application process, creating supporting resources for participants, implementing a system for application review, and coordinating the selection panel.
15. Develop resources and assist participants in developing action plans and collaborative, innovative project proposals for the small grants program.
16. Oversee the responsible transfer and monitoring of funds to selected alumni for projects that take place in the United States and countries around the world.
17. Establish a reporting plan covering recipients of the small grants program and regularly update ECA with the results of alumni projects.
18. Establish a reporting plan for regional fellows to update ECA on alumni activities they host in their region, ensuring that ECA/P/A is notified of these activities in advance.
19. Facilitate, in coordination with ECA/P/A, continued engagement among the participants and offering opportunities to reinforce the ideas, values, and skills imparted during their exchange and seminar experience, and to strengthen participants' connection to the U.S. Department of State.
20. Collaborate with ECA/P/A to design and implement a performance monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan that assesses the short-and medium-term impact of the program on the participants, and that will enable ECA to assess long-term impact. Prepare and provide interim M&E reports as agreed.
21. Share all data and information, including highlights, gathered on U.S. exchange alumni participants with ECA/P/A on a regular basis through a data sharing framework established in cooperation with ECA/P/A.
22. Establish and implement a plan for maintaining and handing over materials and resources produced through this cooperative agreement to ECA/P/A at the conclusion of the period of performance.

5. 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>.

Due to the nature of the award, this activity is not subject to the MODE Framework requirements. However, it is required that the applicant provide confirmation that their organization will support the Bureau's overall performance monitoring efforts as necessary. The applicant should also include a plan for measuring their success in achieving the stated objectives of the ECA-funded activity.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. Virtual Exchange Component.

When changing political, health, environmental, or other similar circumstances require a suspension or halt of in-person activities and where ECA determines that a virtual alternative is appropriate and viable, award recipients should demonstrate the ability and capacity to transition from in-person to virtual exchanges. ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s) is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project-by-project basis.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Substantial Involvement.

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring, as follows:

1. Approve promotional materials and final timeline of activities proposed by the recipient to achieve each seminar, small grant, and ambassador fellowship program roll-out.
2. Provide clear guidance and final approval on Career Connections seminar locations, speakers and themes, and CDAF small grant themes, emphasizing U.S. State Department policy priorities.
3. Co-develop with the recipient selection criteria for small grants, regional fellows, and seminar participants and serve on the final review panel. The recipient will design and build program applications on an online platform of their choice and will lead program selection review panels.
4. In coordination with Department of State domestic bureaus and overseas embassies/consulates, review and approve final list of small grants and fellowship recipients.
5. Assist with promotion of opportunities to the alumni community.
6. For CDAF small grants recipients, monitor and assess the project, through regular communication with the award recipient, review project reports and in some instances, conduct site visits.
7. Provide feedback following each seminar and program component periodically throughout the cooperative agreement to identify areas of improvement.

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.

Budget requests may not exceed \$1,300,000. 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: Nolen Johnson, U.S. Department of State, Office of Alumni Affairs, ECA/P/A, 202-765-5502, johnsonnp1@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.

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.

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](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/chapter-I/subchapter-A/part-25/subpart-B/section-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 Eastern

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 Grants.gov Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXX) 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.

a. 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).

b. Prohibition on Funding Activities that Encourage Mass-Migration Caravans towards the United States Southwest Border

None of the funds awarded under this grant may be made available to encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass-migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. Funds may not be made available for legal counseling on the United States asylum process; and/or for referrals to legal or representation in the United States.

Funds may only be used for cash cards for use in the country in which they are provided or to facilitate assisted voluntary returns and other purposes that do not encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. The provision of humanitarian assistance is permitted.

c. Iran Programming

A critical component of current U.S. government Iran policy is the support for indigenous Iranian voices. The State Department has made the awarding of grants for this purpose a key component of its Iran policy. As a condition of licensing these activities, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has requested the Department of State to follow certain procedures to effectuate the goals of Sections 481(b), 531(a), 571, 582, and 635(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as amended); 18 U.S.C. §§ 239A and 2339B; Executive Order 13224; and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6. These licensing conditions mandate that the Department conduct a vetting of potential Iran grantees and sub-grantees for counter-terrorism purposes. To conduct this vetting the Department will collect information from grantees and sub-grantees regarding the identity and background of their key employees and Boards of Directors.

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;

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 and clarity of the program idea:** Proposals should be original, well-defined, and relevant to ECA's mission. Proposals should clearly and effectively convey the program idea and excessive attachments will detract from your proposal.
- b. **Program planning and Ability to achieve program aims and purpose:** 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. Proposals should clearly state the program's aims and purpose and demonstrate how your institution will meet them.
- 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. **Impact and Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should strengthen long-term relationships within the Exchange Alumni network and provide a plan for continued follow-on activity after the ECA supported programs within this agreement 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:** Proposals should keep the overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate.

3. Responsibility/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.

G. 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).

H. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

1. 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),
 - 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
 - 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](#)

2. 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. 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.

d. **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, contact information (email), exchange details (year, country, program name(s)), and biographic sketch of all persons who participate in programs funded by the agreement.
2. Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any program experiences take place. Final schedules for activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least one week prior to the official opening of the activity.

I. 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

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