

PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

FY 2019 Future Leaders Exchange Program: Host Family and School Placement and Monitoring Component

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0005413

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division

The Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX) Program for Academic Year 2019-2020 comprises a Host Family and School Placement and Monitoring Component, hereinafter referred to as the Placement Component, which is the subject of this Funding Opportunity Number, and the Organizational Components, which is the subject of a FY 2018 award.

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued by the Youth Programs Division, Office of Citizen Exchanges, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) for the FY 2019 Host Family and School Placement and Monitoring Component FLEX Placement Component. Proposals must conform to the NOFO, the Guidelines stated in this document, and the standard Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Applications not adhering to the conditions set forth herein may be deemed technically ineligible. These guidelines are specific to the program mentioned above and are IN ADDITION TO the Standard Guidelines outlined in the PSI. If there is a perceived disparity between the standard and program specific Guidelines and the program information supplied in the accompanying NOFO, the NOFO is to be the dominant reference.

I. STATEMENT OF WORK

A. Overview

The FLEX program, created in 1992, provides approximately 987 scholarships each year for secondary school students (ages 15- 18.5 years at the start of the program) from Europe and Eurasia to spend one academic year in the United States. To date, approximately 27,500 Eurasian high school students have spent an academic year in the United States living with host families and attending secondary schools. These students are alumni of the FLEX program. The program engages youth and enhances relations between the United States and the countries of Europe and Eurasia. Students live with host families, attend high school, participate in activities to learn about American society and values, acquire leadership skills, and help educate Americans about their countries and cultures.

Placement Component award funding is also intended to sponsor local activities that will enhance the students' knowledge and awareness regarding American style democracy and civil society. This solicitation and the activities to which it refers apply only to FLEX program students who will be recruited from among following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine. In addition, the Bureau might recruit students from Belarus, Russia, and Uzbekistan (previous FLEX countries) for the program in the future. Information about the FLEX Program can

be found at: <http://www.exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/future-leaders-exchange>

Note: The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program's needs and availability of funds in the FY 2019 base year and subsequent two non-competitive continuations in FY 2020 and FY 2021. In addition, the Bureau reserves the right to adjust and/or add additional countries should conditions change in a partner country and/or if other countries and/or regions are identified as viable alternatives and/or Department priorities in the FY 2019 base year and subsequent two non-competitive continuations in FY 2020 and FY 2021.

FLEX Program Participants: FLEX Program participants are 15-18.5 years old at the start of their program. Under the terms of their visas, they must return to their home countries following the conclusion of their exchange program in the United States. Placement Components award recipients (hereinafter referred to as Placement Organizations or POs) are expected to assist the U.S. Department of State in enforcing this regulation.

FLEX finalists are selected on the basis of merit. Applicants undergo a series of exams and are interviewed in person for evaluation of their ability to adjust to new cultures and English language proficiency. Although most applicants have good English comprehension, speaking, and writing skills, a small number of those accepted into the Program (approximately 10% of each Placement Organization's overall student number) will need English language enhancement training and/or independence training after arriving in host communities. The U.S. Department of State seeks to include students of diverse national and ethnic backgrounds and students with disabilities. Finalists also undergo rigorous medical screening.

Distribution of Students: Your proposal must include a plan to place and monitor a minimum of 20 students, although recipients are encouraged to place more than 20 students; there is no maximum number. Under the Placement awards, POs will accept and place students assigned by the FY 2018 FLEX Organizational Components award recipient. Your organization's students may come from any of the previously mentioned countries, or others as determined by the Bureau. Approval of final allocations to all POs will be made by ECA.

Organizational Components: Overseas operations for the FLEX program are conducted under a separate cooperative agreement for the FY 2018 FLEX Organizational Components. The FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient is responsible for recruitment and selection of students; preparation of cross-cultural materials; pre-departure orientation; international travel from home to host community and return; facilitation of ongoing communication between the natural parents and the placement organization; support of students with disabilities; administration of language program participants; administering civic education workshops and end-of-stay workshops; maintenance of a student database; and ongoing follow-up with alumni after they return home.

Many key activities of the PO will be conducted in direct coordination with the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient. It is imperative for the success of the FLEX program that your organization work efficiently and openly with both ECA and the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient throughout the duration of the award. The FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient is responsible for the coordination of many overarching activities involved in the implementation of the FLEX Program. Each PO is provided the *FLEX Operational Guidelines*, a manual that gives instructions for these overlapping roles that POs must follow for the smooth coordination of tasks.

Disability Component: Students with disabilities are recruited by the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient along with all other students. Students with disabilities must meet the same standards as all other applicants, but may receive reasonable accommodations for testing. Your organization may be asked to place, monitor, and support students with disabilities. The FY 2018 Organizational Component award recipient will conduct training and support for students with disabilities and their Placement Organizations. Additional information is provided in the section on students with disabilities below.

Civic Education Workshops: All FLEX students will have the opportunity to apply to attend a Civic Education Workshop, which is a one-week workshop, generally held in February and March 2020 in Washington, DC. Approximately 200 students will be selected to participate. Your proposal should not contain information about this workshop as it is managed by the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient, but should include confirmation that you will notify your students of the opportunity. PO award recipients will receive additional information from the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient about how your students can apply for the workshop.

English Teaching Workshop: Under a separate award from ECA, students participating in ECA-sponsored academic year programs, including FLEX, will be eligible to apply to attend a workshop focused on teaching English as a foreign language. The workshop may include approximately 10-15 FLEX students. Dates, requirements, and other details will be provided during the program. POs are asked to notify their students of the opportunity to apply.

FLEX Program Goals:

The overall goals of the FLEX program are to:

1. Promote better understanding by youth from the United States and selected countries about host society, people, institutions, values, and culture;
2. Foster lasting personal and professional ties;
3. Advance mutual understanding, respect for diversity, leadership skills, and understanding of civil society during the exchange experience and beyond; and,
4. Enhance understanding of other countries and cultures and increase accurate understanding of American values in communities abroad.

B. Department of State and Award Recipient Responsibilities

Organization Responsibilities and Oversight

The Office of Citizen Exchanges in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State is the designated Exchange Visitor Program (J-1 Visa) sponsor with ultimate responsibility for the FLEX Program. All Placement Organizations – including their employees, officers, agents, and third parties involved in the administration of FLEX – receiving cooperative agreements to administer the Placement Component will be considered under the terms of such cooperative agreements to be third parties “cooperating with or assisting the sponsor [i.e., The Office of Citizen Exchanges] in the conduct of the sponsor’s program” (22 CFR Section 62.2).

Placement Organizations are not required to be designated as J-1 Visa sponsors under the FY 2019 FLEX Host Family and School Placement and Monitoring Component awards. However, as third parties, all Placement Organizations are required to follow J-1 Visa regulations.

Because the actions of such third parties are imputed to the designated sponsor, the Bureau expects that all Placement Organizations (including their employees, officers, agents, and third parties involved in the administration of FLEX) will both comply with the regulations and requirements of the J-1 Visa program and render all necessary assistance to enable the Office of Citizen Exchanges to be in full compliance with the same. Accordingly, Placement Organizations must ensure their “employees, officers, agents, and third parties involved in the administration of [FLEX grants and cooperative agreements] are adequately qualified, appropriately trained, and comply with the Exchange Visitor Program regulations” (22 CFR 62.9(f) (2)).

Relevant portions of the regulations governing the administration of an exchange visitor program are set forth in 22 CFR 62.25(d)(15), Program administration: “Sponsors must ensure that all officers, employees, representatives, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf ... adhere to all regulatory provisions set forth in this Part and all additional terms and conditions governing program administration that the Department may impose.”

ECA Activities and Responsibilities: In a cooperative agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. ECA activities and responsibilities for the FLEX program include:

- 1) Providing advice and assistance in the execution of all program components.
- 2) Serving as liaison between the award recipients and personnel within the U.S. Department of State, including ECA, the regional bureaus, and overseas posts.
- 3) Monitoring and evaluating the program and its participants through communication by email, phone, and site visits.
- 4) Hosting an annual meeting for all award recipients to provide program guidance. The Program Office will hold in-person meetings and virtual meetings in alternate years. In early 2020 this will be a virtual meeting.
- 5) Approving program promotional materials and website information.
- 6) Representing the U.S. Government as the program sponsor at exchange events, program events, and orientations.
- 7) Publicizing program highlights and responding to Congressional and Department requests for information.
- 8) Performing an annual performance evaluation/review. Satisfactory performance is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of Non-Competitive Continuations (NCCs).

Responsibilities of the PO: The FLEX program responsibilities of the Placement Organizations include:

1. **Materials**
Preparing and disseminating PO materials
2. **Marketing**
 - Developing organization-specific promotional and marketing materials that identify the FLEX program as a U.S. Department of State-sponsored program
 - Additional marketing materials can be obtained from the Organizational Component award recipient
3. **Host Families**
Recruiting, screening and selecting host families prior to the students’ departures from their home

Countries

4. Host Schools

Securing enrollment for the students in accredited secondary schools prior to the students' departures from their home countries

5. Clustering

Placing students in clusters wherever possible

6. Language Programming

Implementing specialized English language programming for pre-selected students who require focused preparation for their academic year in cooperation with the FY 2018 FLEX Organizational Component award recipient, which will fund language programming

7. Students with Disabilities

- Placing and supporting at least one student with a disability
- Requesting funds, if needed, for reasonable accommodations to support assigned students with disabilities in cooperation with the FY 2018 FLEX Organizational Component award recipient

8. Trainings/Orientations

- Conducting FLEX-specific training(s) for Local Coordinators¹, volunteers, and Placement Organization staff
- Conducting FLEX-specific pre-arrival orientations for host families
- Conducting FLEX-specific post-arrival orientations for all FLEX participants
- Conducting FLEX-specific mid-year orientation programs for all FLEX participants
- Conducting FLEX-specific re-entry trainings for all FLEX participants

9. Participant Monitoring and Support

- Monitoring and supporting students, host families and Local Coordinators to ensure the health, safety and well-being of participants
- Conducting site visits to 20% of your FLEX students in their host communities
- Communicating student issues that could affect student health, safety, or well-being to the FLEX Program Office
- Responding to data requests from ECA and the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient in a timely manner

10. Enhancements

Providing enhancement activities to further support the program goals and facilitate leadership skills development

11. Community Service

Establishing guidelines for community service requirements

12. Insurance

Providing medical insurance for the students or participating in the U.S. Department of State's ASPE benefit plan

13. Performance Reports

- Reporting quarterly the organization's successes and challenges in achieving program goals and outcomes
- Final reporting of all activities during the award period

14. Evaluation

¹ Local Coordinator refers to the person in the community who will be the exchange student's primary point of contact. Local Coordinators are sometimes referred to as the community coordinator, area representative or local representative.

- Evaluating students to assess impact
 - Conducting quarterly evaluations of your organization's success in achieving the FLEX program outcomes and report such results on a quarterly basis
- 15. U.S. Department of State Web Resources**
- Providing information for hosting outreach
 - Training and registering participants on U.S. Department of State web resources
- 16. Financial Management**
Managing fiscal data and accounting for award funding, as required by Federal law, including cost-sharing and any funds provided to approved sub-award recipients, if applicable
- 17. Sub-Award Recipient Management**
- If applicable, ensuring that sub-award recipients have received a copy of the NOFO and POGI and are versed in all requirements, including OMB Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, your organization's expectations, and J-1 visa regulations
 - Providing oversight to sub-award recipients that ensures the quality of their performance of FLEX program duties under your organization's award

II.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

A. Detailed Guidance Related to Responsibilities Listed Above

1. Materials

Pre-Departure Orientation Materials: Placement Organizations must prepare student materials that will be distributed by the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient during the Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO). Materials must be received by the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient by May 1, 2019 for distribution at PDO. All required materials are listed in 22 CFR 62. Student handbooks or promotional handouts may be more appropriate to distribute after students have arrived in the United States. All materials must identify students as FLEX students and must include information on the U.S. Department of State as the program sponsor.

Promotional Materials: All official documents and materials developed for promotional purposes must acknowledge the U.S. Department of State's role as program sponsor. Documents will include the American flag and the State Department seal. The Bureau will retain copyright use and may distribute materials related to this program. Please see <https://eca.state.gov/comms-guidance> for the most current guidance.

2. Host Families

Placement Organizations' practices and procedures for recruiting, screening, and selecting host families and placing FLEX participants with host families must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25.

Proposals that demonstrate compliance with these regulations and illustrate your organization's oversight over local coordinators will be deemed more competitive. Please contact the FLEX Program Office if you have any questions regarding how the regulations apply to FLEX participants.

3. Host Schools

Placement Organizations' practices and procedures for placing FLEX participants in accredited public or private secondary educational institutions must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25.

With respect to the placement of FLEX participants, the Office of Citizen Exchanges provides the following further guidance that POs must follow in placing students in host schools:

- POs should encourage school administrators to utilize students as resources in the classroom and the community, including discussing options for extra-curricular activities that correlate with Program goals (e.g., Student Council, Junior Achievement, Future Business Leaders of America, volunteer opportunities).

Due to unique cultural sensitivities, POs must obtain ECA concurrence before placing students in religious, private, and non-traditional public schools. For schools with a religious affiliation, student and natural parent approval is also required. Home schooling is not an acceptable option.

4. Clustering

ECA encourages placements in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in a wide range of rural, urban, and suburban settings. Placement Organizations that choose to cluster all or most of their students will be deemed more competitive under the Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Program Objectives review criterion. A cluster is defined as a minimum of three ECA-funded scholarship students² who live within reasonable proximity and can be brought together for FLEX program activities (e.g., orientations; re-entry training, and program enhancement activities).

Applicants are expected to cluster at least 60% of their placements. Multiple local coordinators may work together to form a cluster. Applicants must describe how local staff and volunteers will provide non-clustered exchange students the benefits of orientations and enhancement activities.

5. Language Programming

Your proposal should describe in the narrative appropriate activities for approximately ten percent (10%) of your students who will be identified as needing additional English language support. All language programs should focus on conversational English so students will be better prepared to take part in classroom activities and discussions at the start of the school year. The Language Program (LP) should be individualized to meet each student's specific needs.

The requirements of the Language Program are:

- LP students should be offered a minimum of 20 hours of intensive tutoring at the start of their exchange program, up to 60 hours maximum, to be completed in the first three months of their arrival to the United States.
- In general, Language Program tutoring should be continued as long as the student and tutor feel it is necessary for the student to succeed on the program. Note that some students may need the full 60 hours of tutoring.

²ECA-funded scholarship students are identified as those participating in FLEX, the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX), and the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) programs.

- Acceptable instruction methods include one-on-one professional tutoring and PO-designed programs (such as a group LPs, in or outside the host community) conducted by trained professionals. The curriculum should focus on oral/aural proficiency, including conversation practice, comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary development, and sentence patterns. Less emphasis should be placed on grammar, as the English curriculum of schools in the sending countries is primarily grammar-based.
- Unacceptable instruction methods include language tapes, online courses and other self-directed forms of study.
- Any funds unspent during the pre-program period may be used during the year as needed, including for tutoring.
- The Language Program costs will be funded by the FY 2018 FLEX Organizational Components recipient.
- POs may secure temporary host families for students participating in a Language Program when the program takes place in a different geographic locale than the schools in which these students have been enrolled for the academic year. Temporary host families must be fully vetted pursuant to the host family screening and selecting guidelines, set forth above.
- POs will arrange and provide student transportation from temporary to permanent communities, as required.

6. Students with Disabilities

The FLEX program has provided special assistance to students with disabilities since its inception (approximately 10-20 students per year). Your proposal must include a plan for placing, supporting and monitoring students with disabilities. Separate funding is provided through the FY 2018 FLEX Organizational Components award to help support students with disabilities and their Placement Organizations. You will coordinate necessary accommodation expenses as needed with the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient. Responsibilities of the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient include:

- Contacting disability organizations for hosting outreach.
- Conducting a 3- to 4-day Preparatory Workshop for students immediately upon their arrival to educate students on the laws and resources available for people with disabilities in the United States. Note: The FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient will be responsible for travel to and from the workshop.
- Thoroughly assessing each student's condition and specific needs during the Preparatory Workshop and providing an assessment report to the appropriate Placement Organization.
- Conducting an Inclusion Workshop for Placement Organization representatives for sharing best practices of working with students with disabilities and educating representatives regarding disability issues. Note: The FY 2018 Organizational Component award recipient will be responsible for travel to and from the workshop.
- Providing Placement Organizations with support and resources throughout the year.
- Providing funding for accommodations for students with disabilities.

Reasonable Accommodations: Students with disabilities go through the same selection process as other FLEX

students. However, they may not have been brought up in an inclusive community or they may not have attended a mainstream school before. After the Preparatory Workshop, FLEX students with disabilities will arrive in their permanent host communities. Your proposal should include a plan for helping your student/s with disabilities become acclimated to their community and finding appropriate resources and accommodations as needed and as required by law.

7. Trainings/Orientations

Proposals should include sample outlines with relevant topics to be covered in all trainings and orientations.

FLEX-specific Staff/Volunteer Training and Orientation: POs are responsible for conducting FLEX-specific training for all their employees, including all local coordinators, volunteers, and third parties acting on their behalf who are involved in the Placement Component. This training should be designed to provide the methods and tools necessary for monitoring and counseling FLEX students, their host families, and school personnel with sensitivity to cross-cultural issues unique to this exchange population. The training must ensure understanding of the goals, expectations, and requirements of the FLEX Program as explained in this POGI, as well as all J-1 Visa requirements.

Host Family Orientation: Prior to the student's arrival, the PO must conduct an in-person FLEX-specific orientation for all screened and selected host families and provide them with the information and reference materials necessary to host and support a FLEX student. (Note: Previous interviews during the screening and selecting process do not constitute this FLEX-specific orientation.) The Program Office recommends that orientations for families hosting FLEX students not include private students' host families to ensure that adequate attention is given to FLEX [or YES or CBYX] program-related and cross-cultural issues. It is fine to hold a host family orientation together for host families who are hosting FLEX, YES and CBYX students.

Arrival Orientation for Participants: POs' practices and procedures for the FLEX student orientation must meet the general J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program regulations and the secondary school student category-specific orientation requirements. Orientations should take place within one month of the students' arrival and should address the PO's policies, procedures, and rules, as well as the PO's procedures for communicating with students and for monitoring and supporting their exchange with sensitivity to cultural issues unique to this exchange population. The orientations must ensure understanding of the goals, expectations, and requirements of the FLEX Program as explained in this POGI.

Mid-Year Orientation: POs must arrange a mid-year orientation to meet with all FLEX Program participants approximately halfway through their exchange programs, preferably in January. The purpose of this meeting is to assess their progress in achieving program and personal goals and to provide the necessary assistance to enable them to meet these goals.

Re-entry Training: POs are responsible for preparing students for bringing closure to their American exchange experiences as well as re-entry to their home countries. POs must ensure that students receive relevant information concerning FLEX Program alumni opportunities in their respective countries and discuss individual plans for possible alumni projects. Note: Alumni activities are coordinated in the students' countries through the FY 2018 Organizational Components award.

8. Participant Monitoring

POs' practices and procedures for monitoring FLEX participants must meet the Exchange Visitor Program

regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25.

Monitoring Guidance: The Office of Citizen Exchanges provides the following further guidance that Placement Organizations must follow:

- **Student Progress:** Local coordinators will monitor students' progress in academics, social adjustment, and activities such as community service, exemplary achievements, and other program-related endeavors and track their progress in monthly contact reports.
- **Reporting Systems:** POs will use reporting systems to distribute and collect monthly updates, reports, and other communications that students will fill out and submit themselves. Your proposal should provide details on this system. Plans that describe ways to attain 100% student participation will be deemed more competitive under the "Participant Monitoring" review criterion. The purpose of these student monthly updates is to allow FLEX students to self-report issues and to allow the POs to track these issues effectively. POs must promptly notify ECA and the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient about problems, inconsistencies, or concerns that are identified from these updates.
- **Student Support:** Local coordinators will identify when students may need additional support from their natural parents, peers, or other PO staff; arrange counseling for participants if needed; document the circumstances; and notify the PO who will, when necessary, notify the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient to gain natural parent perspective or concurrence. POs also will notify ECA when necessary.
- **Early Returns:** If a situation leads to an early return request, the PO should provide ECA with consistent and thorough documentation that ensures that the involved students, host families, and natural families are aware of the situation and have been included in its resolution. POs will prepare a clear and concise On-Program Support (OPS) Report of the circumstances detailing communication between parties. The report will be shared with the FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient and ECA. Only the Office of Citizen Exchanges can make the decision to terminate and repatriate a student; under no circumstances will POs or anyone acting on their behalf inform FLEX participants or imply to them that their programs will terminate or that they will be repatriated without specific direction from the Office of Citizen Exchanges.

Site visits:

- Full-time permanent employee(s) or an official designate of the PO's headquarters must conduct site visits to 20% of your FLEX students in their host communities. The purpose of these visits is to see the FLEX students in their host family/community environments. The visits should cover a combination of clustered and non-clustered students. These site visits should be conducted in close coordination with the Bureau to complement Program Office site visits and ensure maximum coverage.
- POs should submit site visit plans to ECA through the on-program support email address provided to award recipients. Site visit plans for October-December should be submitted by September 30, 2019. Site visit plans for January-June should be submitted by December 15, 2019.

Communication Guidance:

- POs, whether they are designated as sponsors by the U.S. Department of State or not, will report to the ECA FLEX Program Office any matters that are required to be reported by a sponsor pursuant to the above regulations. The Program Office, as the FLEX sponsor, will be responsible for reporting to the Private Sector Programs Division of the Office of Designation.

- POs must provide the Office of Citizen Exchanges with reports of all situations that affect the health, safety, or well-being of FLEX participants.
- POs are required to enter complete, accurate, and up-to-date placement information into the FLEX web-based database, including host family and Local Coordinator changes that may occur during the year, within 48 hours of the time that the change took place.
- In a timely fashion, POs must distribute to all FLEX students information that the Office of Citizen Exchanges provides regarding Department-initiated FLEX Program activities. Such activities include: International Education Week, Civic Education Workshop, Global Youth Service Day, and ad-hoc program-related activities that may arise during the year (e.g., online chats, meetings, briefings).
- In a timely manner, POs must inform the Office of Citizen Exchanges of any publicity that highlights students or the FLEX Program in a positive light or otherwise strengthens outreach efforts, particularly those that involve government officials and the media. When the media interact with FLEX students, POs should identify the FLEX Program as a U.S. Department of State-sponsored program.

9. Enhancements

Cultural Enhancement Activities: POs are required to conduct cultural enhancement activities during the academic year to increase the participants’ understanding of American culture, values, and history. These activities should expose students to and increase their understanding of key elements of American civil society and foster dialogue and enduring ties between the students and their host communities.

Examples of cultural enhancement activities include briefings on local/state government and the judicial system; programs on community issues and concerns (e.g., environmental protection, substance abuse prevention, HIV awareness, promoting entrepreneurship and gender equality) and activities that expose participants to and increase their understanding of the diversity that exists in American society.

Funding for enhancement activities should be disbursed in small increments throughout the year to encourage a variety of activities. Applicants should include \$400 per student in your budget to cover the cost of these activities. Enhancement funds may not be spent on packaged commercial sightseeing trips. All enhancement activities should include debrief sessions so participants can discuss what they have experienced.

Leadership Development Programs: POs are encouraged to earmark a portion of the \$400 per student enhancement activities fund for specialized training for the development of leadership skills such as public speaking, team-building, critical thinking, and goal-setting so that the students are prepared to apply these skills once they return to their home countries. Proposed training should explore issues that foster civic responsibility, tolerance, public service, and conflict resolution and management. POs are encouraged to interact with established local youth-oriented groups and to use free or low-cost resources, and/or to provide scholarships through cost-share to enable FLEX students to participate in local and national leadership trainings. This will be assessed under the “Program Planning” section of the review criterion.

10. Community Service

All FLEX students are required to participate in community service activities. POs are expected to provide participants and their host families with clear and precise guidelines that reflect the standards, requirements, and expectations of their organizations, including but not limited to the following:

- Minimum number of hours and type (e.g., volunteer work or other tasks) of required community service; and

- Method by which Placement Organizations will monitor community service.
- Consequences of failing to meet this obligation.

11. Health Insurance

The Bureau offers the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) benefits plan for students participating in the program. Detailed information on ASPE can be found in 10 FAM 240: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/88250.pdf>. There is no cost to the PO if the PO opts to use the ASPE plan. Placement Organizations wishing to use a different plan must demonstrate that such alternate plan provides comparable or more comprehensive coverage. Coverage must begin when students depart their home countries and not conclude until they return home. Please keep in mind that the students with disabilities who participate in the Disability Components Preparatory Workshop must be covered by the Placement Organization's health insurance policy while they are participating in the workshop. If you choose not to use ASPE, your proposal must include a copy of your chosen insurance policy and must include the cost of the insurance in the budget. The insurance you propose to use must meet the requirements of 22 CFR 62.14. **Students and natural families must be informed in writing of any limitations of coverage noted in the policies. Coverage must begin when students depart their home countries and not conclude until they return to their home countries.**

12. Student Financial and Gift Incentives

As recipients of a full scholarship with continuing support and opportunities for alumni, FLEX students accept considerable responsibilities in return. Participation in program activities, including orientations, cluster meetings and events; community service; and presentations during International Education Week are requirements. Therefore, POs should not request funds to give students monetary or other significant material incentives to participate in program-related activities.

13. Performance Reports

The FLEX Program Office will supply quarterly report guidelines. POs must submit all quarterly performance reports in accordance with the instructions in the NOFO no more than 30 days after the reporting period end dates: September 30th, December 30th, March 30th, and June 30th. Please also follow the instructions provided in the NOFO for the submission of the final performance report.

14. Evaluation

The Bureau expects POs to track host families and other key participants and to develop an evaluation plan to measure gains in mutual understanding and the exchange of information. Proposals must include a plan for evaluating program outputs and outcomes as defined by the applicant. ECA may request assistance in administering additional evaluation tools to participants that are separate from your organization's internal evaluation of the program. Award recipients must maintain all data collected, including survey responses and contact information, for a minimum of three years following completion of each participant's exchange visitor program.

15. Department of State Web Resources

Outreach Resources: During the cooperative agreement period, the Bureau may develop hosting resources to assist POs with hosting outreach, and to promote FLEX as a U.S. Department of State program. POs are expected to support promotional campaigns by providing information to ECA and updating promotional materials as needed.

Online Communities: All PO staff and volunteers associated with FLEX are expected to be knowledgeable of the U.S. Department of State's resources such as, but not limited to, www.exchanges.state.gov and www.alumni.state.gov, and to register as members or guest members of the websites, as applicable. Staff and coordinator training as well as orientations for students and host families are to include presentations and demonstrations on these resources.

The U.S. Department of State resource sites must be promoted effectively to participants and participants are expected to become active members at these sites. While POs may provide their own resources and on-line opportunities, these additional online resources may not replace involvement with the U.S. Department of State online communities.

16. Website Management

Your FLEX website page must be easily accessible from your organization's homepage and be kept up-to-date. Please use the U.S. Department of State seal and the American flag on the FLEX webpage. For online student profiles, your website must be secure, so only those who have been fully vetted will be able to see a photo or view personally identifiable information. These profiles, both online and in printed materials, should identify students as FLEX, to differentiate them from your organization's private students.

III. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Applicants should submit a complete and thorough proposal describing the program in a convincing and comprehensive manner. Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

Proposals should address succinctly and completely the elements described below and must follow all format requirements.

NOTE: Proposals submitted through Grants.gov may only be submitted in the following formats:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)
- ASCII Text
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images)

Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>.

Proposals should include the following items. All documents should be appropriately and clearly titled.

Online Forms

- SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance"
- SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs
- SF-424B, "Assurances – Non-Construction Programs"
- Include other attachments, if applicable, such as indirect agreements, form 990, SF-LLL, etc.

Program Narrative

Executive Summary (One page)

In one double-spaced page, provide the following information about the project:

1. Name of organization/participating institutions
2. Beginning and ending dates of the program
3. Proposed theme
4. Nature of activity
5. Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources
6. Scope and Goals
 - a. Number and description of participants
 - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
 - c. Geographic diversity of program, both U.S. and overseas
 - d. Fields covered
 - e. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

Narrative

In no more than twenty (20) double-spaced, single-sided pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below.

1. Vision (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits)
2. Participating Organizations
3. Program Activities (advertisement, recruitment, orientation, academic component, cultural program, participant monitoring)
4. Program Evaluation
5. Follow-on
6. Project Management
7. Work Plan/Time Frame

Additional Information to be Submitted

- **Detailed budget.** The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Each budget must include the following costs:
 - \$125 fixed rate per student monthly allowance for 11 months for social activities and personal items (e.g., movie and pizza with friends, toiletries, haircut). Pro-rated amounts for partial first and last months are allowed.
 - \$300 average per student incidentals allowance fund to be spent by the host family for school start-up costs and other school-related expenses (e.g., yearbook, locker fees, gym shorts) for which receipts must be presented to the Placement Organization
 - \$100 average per student emergency expense fund to be retained by the Placement Organization for small emergency expenses (e.g., eyeglasses, minor dental problems)

- \$400 average per student enhancement activities fund. (All related activities including field visits, leadership training, cross-culture and inter-faith workshops, community service projects, etc. must be included in this amount. Additional funding requests will not be accepted.)
- Support and monitoring of regional and local staff; include support for home visits to a minimum of 20% of students
- Staff travel, i.e., expenses for at least one person per organization, including sub-award recipients, to Washington, DC to attend a two-day ECA Youth Programs Division annual meeting. This will be a virtual meeting in early 2020. Therefore, we ask that you not request funding in this budget.

Budgets also typically include but are not necessarily limited to the following items:

- National and regional coordinator trainings;
- Orientations (post-arrival, mid-program, and re-entry) for students and host families;
- Stipends and honoraria for non-salaried staff and volunteers;
- Identifying, screening (e.g., criminal background checks and interviewing), selecting and orienting host families;
- Monitoring students and host families, trouble-shooting, counseling, and resettling students, as necessary;
- Program materials (including an explanation of how materials will be used);
- Administrative costs (e.g., salaries, communication, and supplies);
- Promotional materials, including website development or maintenance;
- Mandatory school fees, including registration and books; and
- Insurance costs, if not using ASPE.

The ECA requested budget should not include excess baggage fees or international travel, which may be cost-shared. The FY 2018 Organizational Components award recipient will provide funding for reasonable accommodation to support students with disabilities.

- **Budget Narrative.** A budget narrative must be included and provide detailed explanation for each budget line item where the activity purpose or means of calculation may not be clear or require further justification. It should include at minimum: (1) Formulae used to calculate right column totals for multiple or replicated costs, unless clearly noted in the columned budget (e.g., travel and per diem costs for multiple people; training materials and expenses based on participant number, etc.); (2) Supportive explanation and justification for activities and expenses determined essential, but that may not be understood from the narrative or may otherwise be unclear to reviewers (e.g. security expenses, unique training or annual support needs due to country conditions, etc.); (3) Breakdown of costs associated with relatively high amount line item requests that would reasonably be questionable by reviewers. (e.g., if requesting \$50K for “training materials,” or \$100K for “public relations,” you must provide justification as well as an itemized breakdown for the totals to both explain the needs as well as potentially allow for a reduced negotiation if it is deemed that only partial funding is available).
- **Calendar of activities/itinerary.** Anticipated cooperative agreement start and end dates are February 1, 2019 – September 30, 2022. Provide a monthly plan of action or timetable that demonstrates the timing and organization of your responsibilities as the recipient.

- **Letters of endorsement**
- **Resumes and CVs.** Resumes of all new staff should be included in the submission; no resume should exceed two pages.
- **Supplemental Materials.** You may include examples of assessment and evaluation tools, training and orientation agendas, application forms, resource materials and handbooks, etc.
- **First Time Applicant Attachments,** if applicable.

Please note: All applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

As part of final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one- page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

- 1. Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Program Objectives:** The Program Narrative should exhibit originality, substance, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Reviewers will assess the degree to which proposals engage participants in community activities that involve skills development and leadership training. Proposals should incorporate strategies that creatively utilize local resources to ensure an efficient use of program funds. Strong preference will be given to organizations that choose to place participants in clusters of at least three students (these students should be from different countries, when possible) in a particular Local Coordinator's area of responsibility. A detailed agenda and work plan should adhere to all guidelines described in the solicitation package. Reviewers will also assess the degree to which the proposed outcomes of the project are realistic and measurable.
- 2. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. It is a goal of the U.S. Department of State to ensure that all funded programs reflect the diversity of American society. Describe your plans to promote this goal in the selection of host families and in the local enhancement programming. Achievable and relevant features should be cited in both program administration (e.g., selection of participants' host families and schools, program venue, and program evaluation) and program content (e.g., orientations, program meetings, enhancement programming, resource materials, and follow-up activities).
- 3. Placement Organization's Record/Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the Program's goals and outcomes. Reviewers will assess the applicant and its partners, if any, to determine if they offer adequate resources, expertise, and experience to fulfill program objectives. Partner activities should be clearly defined. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with reporting and J-1 Visa regulatory requirements. Past performance of recipients will be considered. For new applicants, proposals should demonstrate capacity to participate in the Program. In addition, organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors must include a discussion of their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements. Proposals that fail to include the above information in their narrative will be deemed less or not competitive under this review criterion. In addition, ECA will review the record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq. of applicant organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors by ECA's Office of Private Sector Exchange. The applicant organization's record of compliance will be used as one factor in evaluating the record/ability of organizations to carry out successful exchange programs.

- 4. Participant Monitoring:** Proposals must include a detailed monitoring plan which addresses Student, Local Coordinator (LC), and Host Family (HF) monitoring and support. Given the importance the U.S. Department of State places on this review criterion, you should dedicate a significant percentage of the narrative to explaining how you will achieve the Department's goals in regard to monitoring the health, safety, and welfare of program participants. You may use the appendices to house additional details and supporting documentation.
- 5. Program Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the program component's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. Evaluation should include outputs and outcomes, as described above, and describe how program success will be determined through stated criteria. Reviewers will assess your plans to monitor student progress and program activities, particularly in regard to intended outcomes indicated in your proposal. Award recipients will be expected to submit quarterly reports, which should be included as an integral component of the work plan.
- 6. Cost-effectiveness and Cost-Sharing:** Reviewers will analyze proposed budgets for clarity and cost-effectiveness. They will also assess the rationale of the proposed budget and whether the allocation of funds is appropriate to complete tasks outlined in the Program Narrative. The overhead and administrative components of the program, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions. Preference will be given to organizations whose proposals demonstrate a quality, cost-effective program.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The NOFO indicates the date the complete proposal is due and the manner in which proposals must be submitted. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this deadline. For further information regarding this program or the competition, call Amy Schulz at (202) 632-6052, Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C/PY, SA-5, Floor 3, Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037; Fax: 202-632-9355; email: schulzaj@state.gov.