

Department of State**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity****(NOFO):** FY 2015 Ngwang Choephel Fellows Program**Announcement Type:** New Grant**Funding Opportunity Number:** ECA-ECAPEC-15-021**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 19.012**Application Deadline:** April 24, 2015

Program Description/Executive Summary: The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs invites proposal submissions for the FY 2015 Ngwang Choephel Fellows Program. The Ngwang Choephel Fellows Program promotes activities that preserve cultural traditions, enhance sustainable development, expand economic opportunities, and support environmental conservation within Tibetan communities in China. ECA anticipates making two awards, each for approximately \$287,500 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals for the Ngwang Choephel Fellows Program.

A. Program Description:**Authority:**

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United

States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

A.1. Purpose:

Focusing on the theme of Economic Empowerment, the FY 2015 Ngwang Choephel Fellows Program offers Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region or other Tibetan areas of China opportunities to enhance their professional business and managerial skills, generate new business ventures, and provide increased employment opportunities within their communities. The Economic Empowerment theme will focus on owners of small and/or family businesses, business professionals, social entrepreneurs, community leaders, pastoral nomads and/or farmers, and educators interested in the practical application of business and management theory. Proposals should provide participants opportunities to learn best practices in creating, managing, and growing successful small businesses, incorporating technology into their business strategy, and utilizing economic tools to enhance their immediate communities. Proposals should focus on conditions that allow for and promote economic growth and increased participation in the global economy as well as promote sustainable and inclusive community economic development.

Proposed projects must be two-way exchanges involving both U.S. and foreign participants and should take place over a two-year period. Economic Empowerment proposals could, for example, include economic activity related to cultural preservation, eco-tourism, traditional medicine, land management, or community-based training programs. Special attention should be paid to concrete outcomes such as job creation, market readiness, small business growth, enhanced professional skills, etc. Proposals should incorporate alternate plans into their narrative in anticipation of any difficulties related to participant travel to or from the Tibetan Autonomous Region or the Tibetan areas of China.

Grant applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If an applicant submits multiple proposals, each of these submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in this competition. Award amounts are anticipated to be roughly \$287,500 for approximately 20 to 30 total exchange participants each.

A.2. Participants

“Participants” are defined as those who travel under grant funding from their country of origin to a designated exchange country. While it is acceptable to have more foreign than American participants under this program model, grant applicants are encouraged to include the maximum number of Americans possible to emphasize the reciprocal nature of the exchange.

Foreign participants should be selected through a merit-based, competitive process in consultation with ECA and the Public Affairs Section (PAS) in Beijing or Chengdu, China. Participants should be owners of small and/or family businesses, business professionals, social entrepreneurs, community leaders, and educators with a demonstrated commitment to their local communities. Selected participants must be self-directed, able to work effectively in a cross-cultural setting, and have demonstrated leadership abilities. U.S. participants should have demonstrated expertise to enhance the proposed program model, contribute to the program goals, and have significant engagement with the foreign participants during their U.S. Fellowships.

A.3. Partner Organizations

Grant applicants must identify the U.S.-based and foreign-based organizations and individuals with whom they propose to collaborate and describe previous cooperative activities, if any.

A.4. Program Activities

Successful grant applicants must fully demonstrate the capacity to provide the following program activities:

A.4a. Recruit Participants

The grant recipient will recruit and select qualified individuals from throughout the Tibet Autonomous Region or the other Tibetan areas of China and the United States for U.S. and foreign fellows. Foreign participants should be selected, with the approval of the

Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy, through a merit-based, competitive process. Unless an organization has its own representative in China, an in-country or regional partner organization should be designated to coordinate participant screening, selection, and orientation prior to the participants' departure for the United States. While ECA and the Public Affairs Section should be informed of — and where possible, involved in — participant selection, full responsibility for project coordination and implementation lies with the grantee recipient.

A.4b. Pre-departure and U.S.-based Orientation

The grant recipient will be responsible for conducting a pre-departure orientation for both foreign and U.S. participants prior to their departure from their home countries. Topics should include an overview of travel and logistics, airport arrival information, and visa regulations. A review of the program schedule and discussion of cultural norms should also be included. A comprehensive orientation for foreign participants upon their arrival in the United States is also highly recommended. The orientation should provide not only information on the program schedule and logistics but also cover life in the United States, such as information on the local community, cross-cultural issues, U.S.-focused professional standards of conduct, etc. Project goals, performance measurements, participant expectations and responsibilities should all be reviewed.

A.4c. Exchange Components

Exchanges for both U.S. and foreign participants should be two to six weeks in length. Exchanges for foreign participants should offer practical information and experiential

learning opportunities that will help them more effectively address issues related to Economic Empowerment in their communities. Participants should be exposed to professional practices and environments through job shadowing, internships, workshops, site visits and other activities designed to provide an in-depth review of how relevant organizations and industries operate in the United States. Specific areas of focus might be, but are not limited to, developing a business plan, marketing, managing growth, social entrepreneurship, organizational leadership, networking and coalition building, working with and lobbying elected officials, media and public relations strategies, fund-raising, volunteerism, mediating conflict, financial management, and budget development. Building mutual understanding through participants' shared social and cultural experiences with a wide variety of Americans is equally important. In support of the cultural component of the exchange, organizations are encouraged to arrange home-stays of any practical length for the participants. The U.S. participants' exchange component should be at the same level of detail as that for the foreign participants, and should also enhance participant understanding of Tibetan professional, cultural, and social norms. The Bureau's policy on Support of Diversity should be integrated into all aspects of the project including, but not limited to, participant selection, program materials, and training methodology. Applicants should make a special effort to recruit and include women and persons with disabilities in the exchange program. Please refer to guidance in the PSI under "Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines" and to item 18 on Reasonable Accommodations under Section D.m3.

A.4d. Visas and International Travel

The proposal must address the grant applicant's willingness to comply with all federal travel regulations regarding the use of U.S. government funds including the Fly America Act and the applicant's willingness to work with ECA and U.S. Embassies overseas to procure U.S. visas for the foreign participants. The grantee will also need to facilitate the procurement of visas for U.S. staff representatives and participants traveling overseas.

Note: All foreign participants must travel on a J-1 visa issued by the U.S. Embassy in Beijing or the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu, China.

A.4e. D.C.-based and Re-entry Meeting

The proposal should include plans for an informal meeting in Washington, D.C. and an in-country re-entry seminar or "debrief" for all returning foreign participants. If possible, the dates of the meetings should coincide with the participants' travel schedules to ensure good stewardship of federal funds. Meetings should be interactive in nature with a special emphasis on creating a forum for participants to share their reflections and observations of their U.S. exchange experience. As appropriate and possible, grant recipients are also encouraged to organize a "debrief" or meeting to allow U.S. participants to discuss their exchange with the Public Affairs Staff at the U.S. Embassy. This could be conducted via webinar or teleconference.

A.4f. Post Fellowship Engagement and Alumni Programming

The grant recipient will develop enhancement activities that reinforce project goals after the participants return to their home country. This could include in-country follow-on workshops, small grants competitions, professional coaching, outreach to and

engagement with the broader alumni community, and support to deepen ties with Fellowship placement organizations. Competitive proposals will exercise creativity in the conceptualization of the follow-on component and its support for the broader program goals.

The tracking of alumni is crucial for the evaluation of the program and for the implementation of follow-on programs. The proposal must provide a clear plan for alumni tracking and cite how it will be coordinated with ECA and the PAS. All statistical information gathered and compiled by the grant recipient on the participants should be transferable to the database maintained at ECA. The award recipient will be required to provide quarterly data submissions via electronic data transfer to the ECA database that are compatible with and meet ECA database standards. The award recipient will be expected to meet all statistical requirements including the submission of all grantee data for the Bureau's annual statistical report.

A.5. Proposal Content

A.5a. Executive Summary: The Executive Summary should be one page in length and include: project title (should be descriptive in nature), goals of the project, names of all partner organizations responsible for project implementation, numbers of participants (both foreign and American), number and approximate dates of the proposed exchanges, and possible placement sites in both the U.S. and overseas.

A.5b. Proposal Narrative: In 20 double-spaced pages the narrative should include:

Program Model, Goals, Objectives, Anticipated Outcomes:

A clear, succinct statement of program model, goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes that expand upon the Economic Empowerment theme as stated in section A.1 of this NOFO. Objectives should be described in specific, measurable, and realistic terms that are achievable within the scope of the project, both in terms of time and funding. Please refer to section D.3d.3. Project Monitoring and Evaluation for guidance in identifying and defining outcomes.

Proposals that clearly delineate salient objectives in measurable terms and plan activities in a sequence that will progressively lead to achieving those objectives will be considered more competitive under review criterion six Project Evaluation in Section E. Application Review Information.

Project Management Plan:

A simple project management plan for the two-year life cycle of the project that lists, in table format, outputs (major events or tasks performed by the grantee organization or partners), dates, and the person or group responsible for each component.

Background Information on Implementing Organizations:

Information on all organizations and staff involved in the implementation of the project including relevant expertise in the project theme and country, past activities and accomplishments, on-going and planned activities in the region not including the

proposed project. Previous grants received from the Bureau should be listed by office (Citizen Exchanges, International Visitors, Academic Exchanges, etc.), project name, countries, year, and amount. Information on previous grants can be included in the narrative or as an attachment (attachments should be appropriately labeled).

Roles and Responsibilities:

A clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of any and all partner organizations as they pertain to program activities, logistics, management, and oversight.

Support of Diversity:

A description on how the Bureau's policy on Support of Diversity will be integrated into all aspects of the project including but not limited to recruitment and selection, Fellowship placements and activities, program materials, training methodology, cultural competencies, etc. Special attention should be given to including women and individuals with disabilities in the exchange program. Please refer to guidance in D.3d.2 Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines in the NOFO and the PSI under "Diversity, Freedom, and Democracy Guidelines."

Post-Fellowship and Alumni Engagement:

The grant recipient will develop enhancement activities that expand the impact of the program within the greater community, maximizes the multiplier effect, and reinforces project goals after the individuals return to their home countries. The proposal should include a defined strategy for alumni engagement that supports the goals of the Ngwang

Choephel Fellows Program and ECA. The proposal must include an outline of proposed activities for alumni engagement, strategies to connect newly minted alumni with past program participants, if applicable; and a plan for supporting long-term linkages within the alumni community.

Evaluation Plan:

The evaluation plan should measure the impact of the program, outline the methodology applied, and clearly articulate how this data will be collected. As appropriate, for objectivity and precision, the grantee may employ a professional evaluator not associated with the grantee to collect and analyze data, draw conclusions, and make recommendations when warranted. When utilizing organizational or in-house expertise, the proposal should explain the expertise of the evaluator in conducting programmatic evaluations. Per the Department of State's Policy on Evaluation, the cost of an evaluation should not exceed one percent (1%) of the total award or project costs.

Detailed evaluation plans that put the narrative over the 20-page limit may be included as an attachment along with sample surveys or other evaluation tools. Attachments should be appropriately labeled). Please refer to section D.3d.3. "Project Evaluation" for further guidance:

Budget:

Please refer to section D.3e in this document for allowable costs and the PSI for guidance on formatting your budget.

Working with the ECA and the Public Affairs Section:

Proposals should include an articulated plan on how the grantee plans to work closely with ECA and keep the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy informed of program activities and project implementation.

Attachments:

Materials that enhance the proposed model and demonstrate project design and implementation should be included as an attachment. Please label each attachment in a clear and concise manner (i.e. Attachment A – Program Management; Attachment B – Letters of Support, etc.). These include:

- A Project Management Plan for the entire life of the project that lists, in table format, outputs (major tasks that will be implemented by the award recipient and partner organizations), dates, and the organization/staff responsible;
- Letters of Commitment and/or letters of support. Letters of commitment or support from partner organizations/ partner institutions should demonstrate a capacity to arrange and conduct U.S. and overseas activities.
- Resumes of proposed key staff (at the applicant organization and all partner organizations) that will be involved in the implementation of the project should be submitted. Resumes should not exceed two-pages in length.
- Draft agendas of professional workshops, conferences, and seminars including pre-departure, orientation, final conference activities, and proposed in-country trainings

- Draft application and recruitment materials
- Draft selection and interview materials
- Outline of proposed alumni programming including sample of small grant applications, if applicable
- Sample evaluation and survey instruments
- Project management plan
- Project promotional materials
- Online models – if proposed

Unsolicited Documents: Attachments that do not directly support the proposed project (i.e., organization brochures, pamphlets, unsolicited reports) are strongly discouraged.

B. Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: Grant Agreement

Fiscal Year Funds: 2015

Approximate Total Funding: \$575,000

Approximate Number of Awards: Two

Approximate Average Award: \$287,500

Floor of Award Range: \$287,500

Ceiling of Award Range: \$287,500

Anticipated Award Date: June 1, 2015

Anticipated Project Completion Date: June 30, 2017

C. Eligibility Information:

C.1. Eligible applicants: Applications may be submitted by public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau 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 OMB Circular 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 will be reduced in like proportion.

C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

a.) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau

funding. ECA anticipates making two awards, in an amount up to \$287,500 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program.

Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition. The Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

b.) **Technical Eligibility:** All proposals must comply with the following requirements or they will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process:

- Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition.
- If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. **Please note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

D. Application and Submission Information:

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff **may not** discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

D.1. Contact Information to Request an Application Package:

Please contact David Gustafson in the Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C/PF, U.S. Department of State, SA-5, 3rd Floor, 2200 C St, NW, Washington, DC 20522-0503, ph: (202) 632-6083, GustafsonDP@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement when making your request. Alternatively, an electronic application package may be obtained from Grants.gov. Please see section D.3f for further information.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation.

Please specify Sue Levenstein and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:

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

Please read all information before downloading.

D.3. Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.3n. “Application Deadline and Methods of Submission” section below.

D.3a. You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package.

D.3b. All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget.

Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

D.3c. All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations 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 have been completed. 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. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

D.3d. You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** Effective January 7, 2009, 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:

- 1) 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.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

D.3e. In addition to 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.

D.3f. If your organization is a private nonprofit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

D.3g. All ECA awards recipient organizations must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing www.GrantSolutions.gov. To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click “Getting Started-Request a User Account” at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday and can be reached at help@grantsolutions.gov or 1-866-577-0771.

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

D.3h. Adherence To All Regulations Governing The J Visa

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is the official program sponsor of the exchange program covered by this NOFO, and an employee of the Bureau will be the "Responsible Officer" for the program under the terms of 22 CFR 62, which covers the administration of the Exchange Visitor Program (J visa program). Under the terms of 22 CFR 62, organizations receiving awards (either a grant or cooperative agreement) under this NOFO will be third parties "cooperating with or assisting the sponsor in the conduct of the sponsor's program." The actions of recipient organizations shall be "imputed to the sponsor in evaluating the sponsor's compliance with" 22 CFR 62. Therefore, the Bureau expects that any organization receiving an award under this competition will render all assistance necessary to enable the Bureau to fully comply with 22 CFR 62 et seq.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the secure and proper administration of Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by recipient organizations and program participants to all regulations governing the J visa program status. Therefore, proposals should explicitly state in writing that the applicant is prepared to assist the Bureau in meeting all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62. If

your organization has experience as a designated Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor, the applicant should discuss their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et. seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of ECA will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

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

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
U.S. Department of State
ECA/EC/D/PS, SA-44, Suite 668
301 4th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20547

D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social

and cultural life in the United States and abroad. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support of Diversity' section of this document as well as the DIVERSITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," 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.

D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a

methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project's objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame), the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is

intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
3. **Participant behavior**, concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
4. **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

Please note: Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

D.3k. Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

D.3l. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. Budget requests may not exceed \$287,500. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification. Review of your budget will benefit from your professional judgment of costs or activities in the proposal. The Bureau is committed to containment of

administrative expenses, consistent with overall program objectives and sound management principles.

For the budget presentation, submit a three-column budget including the following information:

Column 1 FY 2015 Bureau funds request

Column 2 Amount of Cost-Sharing in FY 2015

Column 3 Total FY 2015 Budget (Total of columns 1 and 2)

D.3m. The following program costs are eligible for funding consideration:

1. International and Domestic Air Fares; Visas; Transit Costs; Ground

Transportation Costs. The grant recipient will arrange all aspects of international travel for both U.S. and foreign participants. All travel arrangements must comply with federal regulations regarding the use of U.S. government funds including the Fly America Act.

These regulations apply to both U.S. and foreign travelers. There is no charge for J-1 visas for participants in Bureau-sponsored programs. Costs for visas for U.S. participants should be included in the budget.

2. **In-country Travel Costs for Visa Processing Purposes.** Given the requirements associated with obtaining J-1 visas for ECA-supported participants, applicants should include costs for any travel associated with visa interviews or DS-2019 pick-up.

3. **Travel Allowance.** A return travel allowance of \$70 for participants may be included in the budget. The allowance may be used for incidental expenses incurred during international travel.

4. **Insurance.** Participants will be covered under the terms of a U.S. Department of State-sponsored health insurance policy—Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). The premium is paid by the U.S. Department of State directly to the insurance company. Applicants are permitted to include costs for travel insurance for participants in the budget.

5. **Interpreters.** If interpreters are necessary for foreign participants while in the U.S., grantees are strongly encouraged to hire their own locally-based interpreters. One interpreter is typically needed for every four participants who require interpretation. When an applicant proposes to use interpreters, federal per diem rates (both "lodging" and "M&IE") and transportation costs per interpreter should be included in the budget. Bureau funds cannot support interpreters who accompany delegations from their home country or travel internationally.

6. **Per Diem.** For U.S.-based programming, organizations should refer to the published Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877>. ECA requests applicants to budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed federal per diem rates. Foreign per diem rates can be accessed at:

http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78

7. **Book and Cultural Allowance.** Participants are entitled to a one-time cultural allowance of \$150 per person, plus a book allowance of \$50. U.S. program staff members are not eligible to receive these benefits.

8. **Consultants.** Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Honoraria rates should not exceed \$250 per session. A contractor may also be used, in which case the written agreement between the prospective grantee and contractor should be included in the proposal. Subawards should detail the division of responsibilities and proposed costs, and subcontracts should be itemized in the budget. Contracts should be itemized in the budget.

9. **Room Rental.** Room rental may not exceed \$250 per day per conference room or what is reasonable within a given geographic region.

10. **Materials Development.** Your proposal may contain costs to purchase, develop, and translate materials for participants.

11. **Supplies.** Proposals may contain costs to purchase equipment for programming such as computers, fax machines. Costs for furniture are not allowed. Supply costs for the purchase of equipment must be kept to a minimum.

12. **Working Meal.** No more than two working meals may be provided for each program component. At least one working meal should be budgeted for the D.C. final workshop. The cost per person should not exceed \$45 for the working meal. No charges may be made against U.S. Government funds for alcoholic beverages. The number of invited guests should not exceed the number of funded program participants by more than a factor of two (i.e., no more than 20 invited guests for a working meal involving ten funded program participants).

13. **Wire Transfer Fees.** When necessary, applicants may include costs to transfer funds to partner organizations overseas. Grantees are urged to research applicable taxes that may be imposed on these transfers by host governments.

14. **Reasonable Accommodations.** Organizations should include costs for the reasonable accommodations of participating individuals with disabilities. Proposals may allocate up to 5-7% of the total requested ECA grant funds for this purpose.

15. **Administrative Costs.** Costs necessary for the effective administration of the program may include salaries for grantee organization employees, benefits, and other

direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the Application Package. While there is no rigid ratio of administrative to program costs, proposals in which the administrative costs do not exceed 25% of the total requested ECA grant funds will be more competitive under the cost effectiveness and cost-sharing criterion, per item E.1 in the NOFO.

Proposals should show strong administrative cost-sharing contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner, and other sources. Please also include in the administrative portion of your budget plans to travel to Washington, D.C., to meet with your program officer within the first 45 days after the grant has been awarded.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

D.3n. Application Deadline and Methods of Submission:

Application Deadline Date: Friday, April 24, 2015

Method of Submission: Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the “Find” portion of the system.

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

Please follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/GetStarted>).

Several of the steps in the Grants.gov registration process could take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

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 "For Applicants" 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.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission 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

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, D.C. 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 midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

D.30. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. 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.

E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA

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

1. **Quality of the Program Idea:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission.

2. **Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives:** Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above and should explain how objectives will be achieved. Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. Objectives should directly respond to the thematic area in the announcement and address current conditions within Tibetan communities in China. Timelines should be comprehensive in nature and all major programmatic tasks. The substance of workshops, Fellowships, seminars and/or consulting should be described in detail with sample schedules included for each major workshop, seminar, or conference proposed. Responsibilities of proposed in-country partners should be clearly described. A discussion of how the applicant intends to address language issues should be included, if needed.

3. **Support of Diversity:** Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Achievable and relevant features should be cited in both program administration (selection of participants, program venue, program evaluation, etc.) and program content (orientation, wrap-up sessions, program meetings, resource materials, follow-up activities, etc.). Applicants should refer to the Bureau's Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI).

4. Institutional Capacity and Track Record: Proposals should include (1) the institution's mission and date of establishment; (2) detailed information about proposed in-country partner(s) and the history of the partnership; (3) an outline of prior awards--U.S. Government and/or private support working in the Tibetan Autonomous Region or Tibetan communities in China; and (4) descriptions and resumes of experienced staff members who will implement the program. The proposal should reflect the institution's expertise in the subject area and knowledge of the conditions in the target country. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau grants as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program's goals. The Bureau strongly encourages applicants to submit letters of support from proposed in-country partners, past participants, or proposed hosting organizations.

5. Multiplier Effect/impact and Follow-on Activities: Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages. Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) ensuring that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.

6. Project Evaluation: Proposals should include a detailed plan to evaluate the program, both as activities unfold and at the end of the program. Program objectives should target clearly defined results in quantitative terms. Competitive evaluation plans will describe how applicant organizations would measure these results, including the evaluative methodology and tools to be utilized and proposals. Proposals should include draft data collection instruments (surveys, questionnaires, etc.) as attachments and if relevant, samples data sets from similarly conducted programs. Proposals that clearly delineate salient objectives in measurable terms and plan activities in a sequence that will progressively lead to achieving those objectives will be considered more competitive.

7. Cost Effectiveness and Cost Sharing: Overhead and administrative costs in the proposal budget, including salaries, honoraria and subcontracts for services, should be kept to a minimum. Proposals in which the administrative costs do not exceed 25% of the total requested ECA grant funds will be more competitive under this criterion. Applicants are strongly encouraged to cost share a portion of overhead and administrative expenses. Cost-sharing and in-kind contributions, including contributions from the applicant, proposed in-country partner(s), and other sources should be included in the budget request. Proposal budgets that do not reflect cost sharing will be deemed not competitive under this criterion.

F.) Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Award Notices:

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and mailed to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition.

F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following: Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars).

For a copy of the OMB circular cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>.

<https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>

F.3. Reporting Requirements: You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

Mandatory:

- 1.) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). The first page of the Performance Progress Report form (SF-PPR) must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here:
http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68. The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at:
<http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to

GrantSolutions.gov, in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.

- 2.) A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all program performance reports.
- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 4.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. [Please refer to D. Application and Submission Instructions (D.3j.) above for Program Monitoring and Evaluation information.]

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

F.4. Optional 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 the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information, and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, please contact: Sue Levenstein, U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges, 2200 C Street (SA-5, 3rd Floor), NW, Washington, DC 20522-0503, (202) 632-3298 (tel.) (202) 632-6492 (fax), or LevensteinSL@state.gov.

All correspondence with the Bureau 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, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

H. Other Information:**Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. 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. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section F.3 above.

Evan Ryan

March 4, 2015

Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs

Department of State