

**Department of State**

**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity**

**(NOFO):** FY 2017 Community Solutions Program

**Announcement Type:** New Cooperative Agreement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** ECA-ECAPEC-17-028

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 19.415

**Key Date/Application Deadline:** May 15, 2017

**Program Description/Executive Summary:** The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs invites proposal submissions for the FY 2017 Community Solutions Program in Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa, South and Central Asia, and the Western Hemisphere. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to conduct this professional fellowship program. Created in 2010, the Community Solutions Program supports and encourages initiatives organized by young civic and community leaders, ages 25-38, working to address the economic, environmental, political, and social challenges confronting their respective local communities. Through four- to six-month professional fellowships with a specific leadership component, Community Solutions will provide opportunities for eligible individuals to more effectively address issues of concern in their institutions and communities.

Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

It is the Bureau's intent to award a cooperative agreement for \$2,300,000, pending the availability of FY 2017 funds. Please see **section B.) Federal Award Information, below for additional details.**

**A. Program Description:**

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.

***I. Purpose and Program Description:***

In an increasingly connected world, the economic, environmental, political, and social challenges that confront seemingly disparate communities around the world actually link them together. One community's approaches and solutions to these problems may be

applicable globally. Making progress on complex global challenges on a local scale requires multi-dimensional public engagement strategies to forge partnerships, mobilize broad coalitions, and galvanize public opinion across all sectors of society.

The Community Solutions Program seeks to enhance the skills of approximately 100 civic and community leaders to more effectively address current economic, environmental, political, and social challenges in their communities. Through a four- to six-month fellowship, complemented by leadership coaching and development, Community Solutions will provide opportunities for eligible individuals to experience U.S. best practices and learn effective models of public and community engagement, while developing concrete strategies to better address complex issues in their home communities.

As a global tool to address community-based challenges, the Community Solutions Program seeks to:

- 1) facilitate and strengthen participants' ability to address complex economic, environmental, political, and social challenges through a U.S.-based fellowship;
- 2) provide new skills and resources to enable participants to assume greater leadership roles in their institutions and communities;
- 3) provide concrete tools to facilitate leadership development, community engagement, public discourse, collaboration, effective communication, and project implementation and management;
- 4) cultivate professional ties with U.S. citizens and American economic, environmental, political, and social institutions through collaborative efforts and follow-on projects;
- 5) expand and strengthen the relationship between the people of the United States and other countries to work in partnership to identify solutions to common issues facing both local and global communities; and
- 6) create a global network of diverse, multi-disciplinary professionals and civic leaders committed to problem solving and community engagement.

ECA anticipates funding one project for approximately \$2,300,000, pending the availability of FY 2017 funds, to take place from approximately August 1, 2017 through August 1, 2019 and support young professionals currently engaged in initiatives that seek to improve and enhance the economic, environmental, political, and social well-being of their communities. It is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for two additional consecutive fiscal years, pending the availability of funds and successful performance, before openly competing it again.

The specific themes for the professional fellowships for this program are: Environmental Issues, Tolerance and Conflict Resolution, Transparency and Accountability, and Women and Gender Issues.

Eligible countries and guidance for each theme are provided in Section I.6 below. Proposals that target professional fellowships that are unrelated to the themes referenced in this Notice of Funding Opportunity will be deemed technically ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

### ***1.1. Participants***

For the purposes of this program, “participants” are defined as citizens of the eligible countries selected through a merit-based, global competition to travel to the United States to take part in a Community Solutions fellowship. Participants must be early to mid-level career professionals with demonstrated leadership abilities, who are engaged in a community-based project with the express goal of addressing an economic, environmental, political, and/or social challenge confronting that community (either in or outside of their professional capacity). Participants must possess the intercultural and English language skills necessary to benefit fully from the fellowship.

Fellows should be placed in community-based, non-profit or other civil society organizations, government offices, legislative bodies (state, county, or municipal), and as appropriate social incubators or businesses. Community Solutions Fellows should work with seasoned civic leaders on pre-defined issues of mutual interest. Fellowship hosts should understand that the Fellows, too, are experienced professionals in their home countries who have passed through a rigorous selection process. For them to derive full benefit from the exchange program fellowship, hosts should provide substantive opportunities and real life models for the Fellows to practically apply leadership lessons, explore creative approaches to global challenges, and develop concrete strategies to employ within their local communities. Hosting institutions and organizations should have expertise relevant to the participant’s focus and be working on innovative community engagement projects. Preference should be given to potential host organizations that have identified potential collaborative projects or initiatives that align with Community Solutions participants’ interests. To enhance the viability of these collaborative initiatives, proposals should include follow-on projects that capitalize on existing web or social technologies.

Award recipients should maximize the number of participants and the length of the U.S.-based program at the solicited funding level. Therefore, applicant organizations who engage public and private partners for programming support, and employ other creative techniques to increase or stretch funding dollars will be deemed more competitive than those that do not, under the “Cost Effectiveness and Cost-Sharing” review criterion.

### ***1.2. Partner Organizations***

Award recipients must identify the U.S.-based and any foreign-based organizations and individuals with whom they are proposing to collaborate to implement the Community Solutions program, and describe any previous cooperative activities. While having a

presence in each eligible country is not required, applicants that demonstrate institutional capacity overseas (whether through their own resources or through partnerships with other organizations or institutions) will be given strong consideration under the “Institutional Capacity and Track Record” criterion. In addition, proposals must demonstrate capacity in the United States to secure effective and appropriate host placements for the participants. Proposals that include letters of commitment from possible U.S.-based host organizations will be deemed more competitive under the “Institutional Planning and Track Record” criterion.

### ***1.3. Project Activities***

Projects should include placement of participants in carefully identified four- to six-month fellowships in non-profit organizations and other public and civil society organizations where they will work with seasoned community leaders on complex global challenges related to the participants’ community activities. Strong project designs will ground and augment the fellowship experience with leadership development activities that relate to civic engagement.

### ***1.4. Program Guidelines***

In a cooperative agreement, ECA’s Office of Citizen Exchanges, Professional Fellows Division, is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. ECA anticipates working closely with the recipient organization to ensure that all aspects of the program model support the Community Solutions program goals. ECA activities and responsibilities for this program include participation in the design and direction of program implementation including recruitment and selection strategies, development of publicity and program materials, creation of online components, and execution of U.S.-based and follow-on programming.

Additional guidelines and programming responsibilities of the recipient organization and ECA are in the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI).

***1.5 Projected Timeline.*** ECA envisions the approximate dates of FY 2017 the Community Solutions Program activities to be as follows:

- *August 2017 – January 2018:* Recruitment and selection of foreign participants.
- *January 2018 – May 2018:* Recruitment of U.S. hosting institutions. Secure U.S.-based hosts and fellowship sites.
- *July/August 2018:* Community Solutions Fellows travel to the United States to attend a D.C.-based orientation before departing for fellowship sites.
- *July/August 2018 – December 2018:* Community Solutions U.S.-based fellowship.
- *December 2018:* Community Solutions Fellows travel to Washington, D.C., for the end-of-program workshop before departing for their home countries.

- *January 2019 – July 2019:* Conduct follow-on projects. U.S. participants travel overseas to support collaborative projects.

### ***1.6 Professional Fellowship Themes.***

**Themes and Eligible Partner Countries:** Proposals should embrace a global program design that incorporates all of the proposed themes under Community Solutions. Program participants should be from all of the regions listed below. Proposals that target countries or themes not listed in this solicitation will be deemed technically ineligible. No guarantee is made or implied that every country will have participants. 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 the availability of funds. In addition, the Bureau reserves the right to adjust and/or add eligible countries should conditions change in a country and/or if other countries are identified as viable alternatives and/or based on Department priorities.

### **Geographic Regions and Eligible Countries include:**

#### **Africa:**

Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

#### **East Asia and the Pacific:**

Burma, Brunei, Cambodia, Federated States of Micronesia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Thailand, and Vietnam

#### **Europe and Eurasia:**

Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, and Ukraine

#### **Middle East and North Africa:**

Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and West Bank/Palestinian Territories

#### **South and Central Asia:**

Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

#### **Western Hemisphere:**

Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Paraguay, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago

### **Thematic Areas:**

#### **Environmental Issues:**

Fellowships should focus on issues related to water and resource management, food security, supporting food supplies (at local, regional or national levels) including locally-sourced or community agriculture, social entrepreneurship (leveraging science and technology to address ecological and environmental issues), low-carbon technologies, and the use of natural resources, renewable energy, and pollution. Fellowships may also

explore the role of educational programs and youth engagement as they pertain to environmental sustainability.

**Tolerance and Conflict Resolution:**

Fellowships should expose participants to issues and strategies addressing tolerance, multi-culturalism, anti-discrimination, inclusion, and conflict resolution. Negotiation skills, the art of compromise, fair treatment and inclusion of minority and marginalized populations, preventing community-based violence, youth engagement, and civil and human rights could also be addressed. Based on participants' specific interests, fellowships may need to be identified that deal with conflict resolution and crisis response techniques in failing, failed, and post-conflict states and complex emergencies/disasters. Fellowships may also explore the way technology and social media can be utilized as tools for promoting tolerance, inclusion, resolving conflicts, and preventing violence.

**Transparency and Accountability:**

Fellowships should provide exposure to programs, models, and/or institutions related to civil society and civil liberties, grass-roots democracy, good governance, open government, anti-corruption, transparency, accountability, press freedom, and/or fair elections. Fellowships may also explore the role technology and media play in supporting civil society and corporate and public accountability and transparency. Under this theme, the important role of youth engagement and volunteerism could also be addressed.

**Women and Gender Issues:**

Fellowships should focus on issues related to women's education, empowerment, health, and entrepreneurship. Under this theme, fellowships may also focus on gender issues and equality, preventing exploitation and abuse, including gender-based and domestic violence, and public policies or community perceptions related to gender stereotyping. Special emphasis should be placed on identifying fellowships that will provide exposure to best practices for grassroots organizations working to advance the political, economic, and social empowerment of women and/or the protection of the individuals marginalized because of their gender.

**B. Federal Award Information:**

**Type of Award:** Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed in Section A under I.4. "Program Guidelines" and in the accompanying POGI.

**Fiscal Year Funds:** FY 2017

**Approximate Total Funding:** \$2,300,000, pending the availability of FY 2017 funds.

**Approximate Number of Awards:** one

**Approximate Average Award:** \$2,300,000, pending the availability of FY 2017 funds.

**Floor of Award Range:** none

**Ceiling of Award Range:** \$2,300,000, pending the availability of FY 2017 funds.

**Anticipated Award Date:** Pending the availability of funds, August 1, 2017.

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** August 1, 2019

**Additional Information:** Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for two additional consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

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**C. Eligibility Information:**

**C.1. Eligible applicants:** Applications may be submitted by U.S. 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.

While there is no rigid ratio of administrative to program costs, proposals in which the administrative costs do not exceed 28% of the total requested ECA grant funds will be more competitive under the Cost Effectiveness and Cost Sharing review criterion.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in this NOFO and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's 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 one award, in an amount \$2,300,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

b.) Technical Eligibility: All proposals must comply with the following: 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.

- Proposals that target professional fellowships that are unrelated to the themes referenced in this Notice of Funding Opportunity will be deemed technically ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.
  
- Proposals that target countries not listed in this solicitation will be deemed technically ineligible.

#### **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 Program Officer Linnéa E. Allison in the Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C, SA-5, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 632-6060 or [allisonle@state.gov](mailto:allisonle@state.gov) to request a Solicitation Package.

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

It also contains the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document, which provides specific information, award criteria and budget instructions tailored to this competition.

Please specify Linnéa E. Allison 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.2a. Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under “D.3p. Application Deadline and Method 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 and the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) 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](http://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. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts. Failure to register in SAM.gov 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](http://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](mailto: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  
SA-44, Suite 668  
301 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

#### **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**, such as 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. Virtual Exchange Component:** ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our [International Exchange Alumni](#) space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

**D.3l. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients:** All ECA Grant Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

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

D.3n. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. 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.

D.3o. Allowable costs for the program are outlined in the POGI. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

D.3p. Application Deadline and Method of Submission:

Application Deadline Date: May 15, 2017

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/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

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](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after 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.3q. 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 Program Idea and Ability to Achieve Objectives:** The proposal should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Program objectives should be stated clearly and should reflect regional expertise as well as capacity in leadership development and the Community Solutions' four thematic areas. Objectives should respond to the topics in this announcement and should relate to the current conditions in the target country/countries. Timelines should be comprehensive in nature and include deadlines for completion of all major tasks and activities. The substance of workshops, U.S.-based fellowships, seminars and/or consulting should be described in detail and outline how they will be integrated into and support the larger program objectives. Responsibilities of proposed partners including contractors, trainers, coaches, and regional/in-country partners should be clearly described. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program's goals.

**2. Cost Effectiveness and Cost Sharing:** Overhead and administrative costs in the proposal budget, including salaries, honoraria and subcontracts for services, should be reasonable while ensuring proper support for program activities. You are strongly encouraged to cost share a portion of overhead and administrative expenses and/or find innovative ways to off-set costs. Cost-sharing and in-kind contributions, including contributions from the award recipient, proposed in-country partner(s), and other sources should be included in the budget request. While there is no rigid ratio of administrative to program costs, proposals in which the administrative costs do not exceed 28% of the total requested ECA grant funds will be more competitive under this review criterion. You should address how you will utilize innovative tools, low-carbon technologies, and socially responsible approaches to program implementation, including web-based and other technologies, to reduce the program's carbon footprint and be a faithful steward of federal resources.

Applicant organizations who engage public and private partners for programming support, and employ other creative techniques to increase or stretch funding dollars will be deemed more competitive than those that do not, under the "Cost Effectiveness and Cost-Sharing" review criterion.

**3. Support of Diversity:** Your proposal 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.). Diversity, in its broadest sense, should be used as a platform for learning and advancing stated program goals and objectives. You should refer to the Bureau's Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines in the PSI.

**4. Multiplier Effect/Follow-on Activities:** Your proposed program should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages. Emphasis should be placed on how the program will cultivate and provide support for global network of civic leaders and the impact this will have in communities in the United States and around the world.

**5. Institutional Capacity and Track Record:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. Responsibilities of proposed in-country partners should be clearly described in the proposal. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. Proposals that include letters of commitment from possible U.S.-based host organizations will be deemed more competitive under this criterion. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. While having a presence in each eligible country is not required, applicants that demonstrate institutional capacity overseas

(whether through their own resources or through partnerships with other organizations or institutions) will be given strong consideration under this criterion.

**6. Project Evaluation:** Your proposal should include a detailed plan to evaluate the program, both as activities unfold and at the end of the program. Special emphasis should be placed on evaluating the effectiveness of the program's leadership development training as it relates to the program's stated goals and objectives as well as the creation of a global network of community leaders. Program objectives should target clearly defined results in quantitative terms. Competitive evaluation plans will describe how you measure these results, including the evaluative methodology and tools to be utilized and proposal. Your proposal may include draft data collection instruments (surveys, questionnaires, etc.) and if relevant, sample data sets from previous professional programs.

## **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 transmitted 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.

The following additional requirements apply to this project:

### **For assistance awards involving the Palestinian Authority, West Bank, and Gaza:**

All awards made under this competition must be executed according to all relevant U.S. laws and policies regarding assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and to the West Bank and Gaza. Organizations must consult with relevant Public Affairs Offices before entering into any formal arrangements or agreements with Palestinian organizations or institutions.

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact (Linnea Allison, 202-632-6060 or at AllisonLE@state.gov) for additional information.

### **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](http://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). A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet 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](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](mailto: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](http://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 final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 3.) 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](mailto: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.3j. 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.

**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 the Linnéa E. Allison in the Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C, SA-5, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 632-6060 or [allisonle@state.gov](mailto:allisonle@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 F3. Reporting Requirements above.

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Mark Taplin  
Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs  
U.S. Department of State

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Date