

Department of State

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

(NOFO): FY 2022 Fulbright Specialist Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0007709

Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.401

Key Date/Application Deadline: June 1, 2021

Executive Summary: The Office of Academic Exchange Programs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the U.S. Department of State invites proposal submissions for a cooperative agreement to assist in the FY 2022 administration of the Fulbright Specialist Program, pending the availability of funds. The Fulbright Specialist Program is a key element of the Fulbright Program and a distinct component of the Fulbright Scholar Program. It offers opportunities for U.S. academics and professionals (such as attorneys, business professionals, artists, and journalists) who possess significant professional, academic or artistic experience in their respective field, to build capacity and promote linkages between their home and overseas host institutions by engaging in short-term, collaborative projects.

For 75 years, the Fulbright Scholar Program has offered awards for college and university faculty, as well as for non-academic professionals and independent scholars, to lecture and conduct research abroad. Tens of thousands of U.S. and non-U.S. scholars and professionals have participated in these exchanges since the Fulbright Program's inception in 1946. The Fulbright Specialist Program sends approximately 465 U.S. academics and professionals annually to educational and other institutions in all regions of the world for periods ranging from two to six weeks. The Fulbright Specialist Program is unique in Fulbright's suite of programming in that U.S. Fulbrighters do not carry out their own research agenda, but rather are matched to projects designed by partner host institutions overseas. During the short-term exchange, specialists share their expertise, strengthen institutional linkages, hone their professional skills, gain international experience, and learn about other cultures while building capacity at their overseas host institutions, which may include universities, teacher-training institutions, government ministries, cultural institutions, NGOs, and think tanks. They return home to share their experiences and increased expertise with their students, and their fellow U.S. faculty and professionals, as well as with their U.S. institutions and communities, better positioning them for greater career success and effective international engagement. Responsibility for the management of the Fulbright Specialist Program is shared between the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., forty-nine binational Fulbright commissions, approximately 100 U.S. embassies overseas, and the award recipient in the United States solicited through this NOFO. Overall policy guidelines for the Fulbright Specialist Program are determined by the Presidentially-appointed Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (FFSB). The organization that is awarded the cooperative agreement under this competition will be responsible for program promotion; the recruitment, selection, and monitoring of Fulbright Specialists; matching Fulbright Specialist candidates to host institution-designed projects; disbursement of funds; and record keeping for the Fulbright Specialist Program. ECA expects close collaboration between the administrators of the Fulbright Scholar and Fulbright Specialist Programs to cross-promote the programs as part of the broader outreach and recruitment efforts for each program. This work will be supervised by ECA.

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.

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.

The Department of State will provide funding to the successful organization to assist in the administration of the Fulbright Specialist Program. The Fulbright Program was created by the U.S. Congress at the end of World War II to enhance mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people of other countries. In the intervening years, the Fulbright Program has evolved into the premiere educational exchange program sponsored by the people of the United States through their federal government, and an important element in the foreign policy of the United States. The Fulbright Program, which now extends to more than 160 foreign countries and involves approximately 8,000 participants per year, has supported 400,000 participants, many who have gone on to be leaders in their fields, in its 75 year history.

One hallmark of the Fulbright Program is its binational character. The United States Government and foreign governments, educational institutions and, other public and private entities are all partners in this enterprise. In many countries of the world, financial contributions from governments or public/private sources match or exceed those of the United States government. Because of its binational nature, the profile of the Fulbright Program worldwide reflects a range of objectives and interests.

ECA, as sponsor and manager of the Fulbright Specialist Program, plays a significant role in the planning and implementation of all program initiatives, publicity, and promotion, as well as liaison with overseas field partners. ECA will work closely with the award recipient on program promotion, project submission, participant selection and matching procedures, and disbursement of funds. ECA will approve all project proposals and set all country project allocations. The award recipient should maintain ongoing contacts with ECA/A/E program managers throughout the year. Through this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), ECA seeks new ideas to effectively publicize the program both internationally and in the United States, develop and manage the Fulbright Specialist register, maintain an effective process of matching specialists to available projects, and develop new protocols for managing multiple funding models (traditional cost share and fully field-funded models), rapid response projects, discipline-specific recruitment needs, and other Department of State initiatives.

Under the auspices of the FFSB, approximately 465 U.S. citizens are awarded Fulbright Specialist grants each year through a merit-based, competitive process. The Fulbright Specialist Program offers U.S. scholars and professionals grants of two to six weeks to conduct projects at host institutions in over 150 countries. The program provides a short-term, “on-demand” (i.e., with relatively quick turnaround time from project request to execution) Fulbright resource for host countries to build capacity in a variety of academic fields. The program promotes long-term collaborative relationships between U.S. and host country higher education institutions or related entities through academic projects that align with Department of State and host country priorities.

Under the Fulbright Specialist Program, U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions may submit a predetermined number of project proposals to ECA each fiscal year. This program operates on a rolling, year-round basis and includes the following components.

- *Fulbright Specialist Project Development:* U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions solicit projects from foreign higher education institutions or other entities, for institutions, fields, and/or anticipated audiences that are also priorities for the embassy/commission. Proposed projects should contribute to the creation of new academic programs or fields of study at host institutions of higher education; build institutional relationships with U.S. academia; strengthen newly established or developing host universities; or provide “rapid response” programming that targets emerging needs in specific regions and/or countries such as response to disasters, fast-breaking events and emerging foreign policy priorities. U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions are responsible for submitting specialist proposals for review and approval by ECA. Host institutions may be: a) foreign universities or higher education institutions, or b) other institutions which do not grant post-secondary degrees but focus on education. (These may include government institutions and other organizations that support public policy, teacher-training institutions, cultural institutions, NGOs and think tanks.) Specialist projects’ primary activities may include faculty and teacher training, curriculum or educational materials development and evaluation, consultations on faculty development, and/or needs assessments and program evaluations. ECA also encourages specialists to give presentations or guest lectures and carry out small-scale research projects as supplemental activities. Fulbright Specialist project proposals outline the specialist activities, objectives, impact, audience and host institution, host community and/or home institution cost share.
- *Fulbright Specialist Project Submission:* U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions may submit host institution-designed projects online to ECA on a rolling basis until a country’s annual project allocation is reached. The average time from project application to specialist deployment in country is approximately six months. However, under certain conditions, for projects in ECA priority areas, a rapid response may be requested, and deployment can be expedited. Projects may be scheduled to start at any date within one year of submission.
- *Fulbright Specialist Register Development:* The Fulbright Specialist Program maintains an online register of pre-screened, eligible scholars and professionals in a large number of academic fields. Scholars and professionals apply on a rolling basis to join the online register. Prospective applicants do not need to be named to a specific project in order to

apply to the register. To be admitted to the register, a specialist program applicant must be reviewed by an independent academic panel of scholars and professionals. Peer review panels meet virtually multiple times per year. Applicants who are approved in the peer review process join the Fulbright Specialist register for a period of up to three years. Once an applicant is placed on the register, s/he is a Fulbright Specialist “candidate” and is eligible to be named to Fulbright Specialist projects. A candidate who has been matched to a specific project is submitted to the FFSB for final approval.

- *Requesting a Fulbright Specialist:* U.S. embassies, Fulbright commissions and/or foreign host institutions may request that Fulbright Specialist candidates listed on the online register be matched to their proposed project. Especially in academic fields where there are limited or no pre-screened candidates on the register, embassies, commissions and host institutions may identify U.S. faculty and professionals for their proposed project who are not yet on the register and encourage them to submit an application to the register. Specialist candidates may apply to the register throughout the year on a rolling basis.

In FY 2022, ECA will continue efforts to strengthen exchanges in parts of the world which have been underrepresented in the Fulbright Specialist Program and also to increase participation of underrepresented academic disciplines and professional fields that are relevant for the priorities of the U.S. embassy, the Fulbright commission, and the host institution. Applicant organizations should demonstrate capacity and leadership in the field of international exchange, which may include research and engagement with higher education communities both in the United States and abroad, as well as the ability to address priority issues and topics of global importance through international exchange. ECA seeks innovative recruitment approaches and creative strategies to attract Fulbright Specialist applicants, and to assist U.S. embassies and Fulbright commissions with host institution recruitment challenges overseas.

A1. Substantial Involvement:

In a cooperative agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. These activities and the roles and responsibilities of ECA are as follows:

- Participating in and approving the design and direction of all program activities;
- Approving key personnel;
- Approving and providing input on program timelines, agendas and administrative procedures;
- Providing guidance in execution of all program components, in particular execution of program policy and guidelines;
- Reviewing and approving all program recruitment, publicity, and outreach materials, which are to be created;
- Reviewing and approving projects and participating Fulbright Specialists, in cooperation with Fulbright commissions and U.S. embassies, subject to final selection by the FFSB;
- Approving significant changes in the scope of Fulbright Specialists’ specific projects;
- Approving decisions related to special circumstances or problems through the duration of the program;
- Providing guidance and assisting with participant emergencies and medical evacuations;

- Liaising with relevant U.S. embassy, Fulbright commissions, and other program stakeholders, including Department of State personnel; and
- Responding to media inquiries and communicating with the press.

A2. Recipient Responsibilities

The activities and the roles and responsibilities of the award recipient are outlined in the greater detail in the Project, Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document: including as follows:

- Advertising and recruiting applicants in the United States for the Fulbright Specialist register and all available opportunities.
- Managing a merit-based academic peer review process to recommend candidates for participation in the program. The integrity and independence of that review process is a hallmark of the Fulbright program.
- Creating and overseeing an online Fulbright Specialist project management system, which allows U.S. embassies, Fulbright commissions, and host institutions to develop and submit specialist project proposals that are approved by ECA. The online system must also house the Fulbright Specialist register and include a robust module for producing financial (including cost-share), programmatic and final reports. The award recipient, through the online system, is responsible for matching specialist candidates to proposed projects. The online system must also produce weekly reports of specialists going abroad to conduct projects, and an up-to-date accounting of country allocations.
- Managing and overseeing all aspects of the following: specialist travel arrangements, individual grant administration, including grant authorization documents, and disbursements of funds.
- The Fulbright Specialist Program must reflect changing conditions and requirements within the U.S. academic community, Department of State and ECA priorities, and varying circumstances and emerging needs in overseas academic environments. The award recipient should be prepared to offer expertise and innovative thinking to ECA on current research, pedagogical, administrative, institutional, and other academic issues and concerns to promote the relevance, quality and effectiveness of the Fulbright Specialist Program. The award recipient must demonstrate flexibility to respond quickly to changing priorities and global circumstances when administering the Specialist Program.
- Effective administration of the Fulbright Specialist Program requires close collaboration between ECA, the award recipient in the United States, and Fulbright commissions and U.S. embassies overseas.

B. Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in the program is listed under A1. Substantial Involvement under A. Program Description and is listed under Substantial Involvement in the POGI.

Fiscal Year Funds: 2022

Approximate Total Funding: 4,500,000, pending the availability of funds

Approximate Number of Awards: 1

Approximate Average Award: \$4,500,000, pending the availability of funds

Floor of Award Range: None.

Ceiling of Award Range: \$4,500,000, pending the availability of funds

Anticipated Award Date: October 1, 2021, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Project Completion Date: December 31, 2024.

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 at least two but up to four additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

The Department reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

C.) Eligibility Information:

C.1. Eligible applicants: U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit applications for this competition. Applicants must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

All applicants must also have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and be registered in SAM.gov (see additional information about this requirement in D3a and D3c below).

C.2. 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 cooperative agreement, in an amount of \$4,500,000 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.

b.) Technical Eligibility: All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, POGI (if applicable), and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI); non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process:

c.) 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.

C.3. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing 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 the Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution may be reduced in like proportion.

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 Cecilia Kocinski-Mulder or Vincent Pickett in the Office of Academic Exchange Programs, ECA/A/E/MR, SA-5, 4th Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, by telephone at 202-655-1611 or 703-625-7670, or by email at Kocinski-MulderCP@state.gov or PickettVS@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 Cecilia Kocinski-Mulder 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 <https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov>.

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.3n. “Application Deadline and Method of Submission” section below.

D.3a. Unique Entity Identifier Number: 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 (Data Universal Numbering System or DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package. For more detailed instructions for obtaining a UEI (DUNS) number, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

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

D.3c. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM): 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 a current registration in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting is completed on any issued award. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts. Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>

D.3.d. Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System (FAPIIS): Prior to making a Federal Assistance award over \$250,000, the Federal agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in FAPIIS (see 41 U.S.C. 2313) and accessible through SAM.gov. If an Applicant is currently in FAPIIS, they can comment on any information about its organization that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in FAPIIS, in making a judgment about the applicant’s integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

D.3e. Required Registration with SAMS Domestic: All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State’s

SAMS Domestic by accessing <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com> and clicking the “create an account” link. SAMS Domestic is the U.S. Department of State’s grants management system and is supported by the Department’s Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). Recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories that have previously used SAMS Domestic as a U.S. Department of State award recipient do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact the ILMS Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Recipient Organizations and recipient contacts and signatories is available 24 hours, 7 days a week (except federal holidays), and can be reached at 1-888-313-ILMS (4567) or through the ILMS Self Service Portal at <https://afsism.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>.

In the event the ILMS Help Desk is unable to provide you with assistance in a timely manner, please contact ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov and copy the program officer associated with the solicitation.

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

D.3f. FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY - ADHERENCE TO ALL REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE J VISA: The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
U.S. Department of State
SA-4E (Bldg. 3)
2430 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.3g. 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.

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.

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.3h. Program Monitoring and Evaluation: Please Note: The Bureau plans to add standardized indicators and corresponding data collection questions for performance monitoring during the period of performance of this award. Therefore, proposed performance monitoring plans and data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established. 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.

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

D.3k. Budget Format: Applicants must submit SF-424A – "Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs" along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. Pending the availability of FY 2022 funds, up to \$4,500,000 in U.S. Government funding will be available to support the administration of the Fulbright Specialist Program worldwide in FY 2022. 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. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase funding amounts pending the availability of funds, the needs of the program, and U.S. Department of State foreign policy priorities.

D.3l. Key Personnel

ECA recommends that the applicant identify intended key personnel positions via an asterisk (*) or other marking in the proposal budget, budget narrative, or a separate appendix. If not provided in the application, recipients must submit the names, titles, and brief biographical sketches of key personnel to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions, VI. Recipient Responsibility and Compliance with Federal Requirements (link to: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>).

D.3m. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

Participant Costs:

- 1) Participant costs, which may include (but may not exceed the rates prescribed by federal travel regulations):
 - a. Round-trip international and domestic airfare
 - b. Visa fees
 - c. Ground transportation
 - d. Other transit costs
 - e. Housing accommodations
 - f. Honorarium (approximately \$200/day per participant)
 - g. Meals and incidentals additional costs associated with normal administration of programs
 - h. Costs associated with ensuring individuals with disabilities or medical conditions are supported at a level that allows for a successful experience
- 2) Additional costs associated with normal administration of exchange programs
- 3) Special project-related costs, as approved by ECA, (examples may include project-related additional baggage and procurement of materials)

Administrative Costs:

- 1) Staff salaries, benefits, and support services for the program (fringe benefits should be stated separately from salary costs);
- 2) Space rental requirements; office rent, furniture, and equipment;
- 3) Communications, printing, and publishing, and office supplies used for the program;
- 4) Program-related staff travel (may not be required): round trip domestic and/or international airfare, visas, ground transportation, transit costs, and per diem (all per diem must not exceed the rate prescribed by federal government regulations);
- 5) And other fees associated with the normal administration of exchange programs, including but not limited to Recruitment; Application, Screening and Selection; Project Funding Models and Submission, and Matching Process; Post-Nomination Services; Special Projects; Program Planning and Reporting Management; General Program Responsibilities; Outreach and Marketing; Fiscal Management; and Follow-on.

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

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

Application Deadline Date: June 1, 2021

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

D.3o. Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures

Eligible organizations should follow the instructions available in the ‘Get Started’ portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

Applicants should read instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

The registration process can take up to four weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines. Applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov. Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov

For access to complete instruction on how to apply for Notice of Funding Opportunities on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>

Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission issues to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800-518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays Email:

support@grants.gov

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

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

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

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When ECA successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgement of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Please also be mindful of any Grants.gov generated error messages that may appear during the application process as they may result in some documents not transmitting correctly.

Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "Applicant FAQs" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov. Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>.

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.3p. 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 U.S. 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:* The proposal should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's priorities and mission. Proposed programs should strengthen mutual understanding and the establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.
2. *Program planning and ability to achieve program 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. The proposal should clearly demonstrate how the applicant will meet the program's objectives and plans, while demonstrating innovation, productivity, and a commitment to academic excellence. The proposal should demonstrate a capacity for flexibility in the management of the program.
3. *Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability:* Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program's goals. The applicant should demonstrate well-established links to the scholarly and professional community in the U.S. and knowledge of other educational environments as they apply to academic and professional exchange programs. The proposal 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 the Bureau's Grants Division. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
4. *Cost-effectiveness and Cost-sharing:* The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. The proposal should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.
5. *Support of Diversity:* The proposal should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. The proposal should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation, including individual grantee/participant recruitment, selection and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.

6. *Project Evaluation*: The proposal should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The award recipient will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.

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 as identified in the application.

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

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 Guidance 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 Guidance 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:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb>

<https://www.state.gov/m/a/ope/index.htm>

F.3. Region and Topic Specific requirements: The following additional requirements apply to this project:

F.3a. Palestinian Authority, West Bank, and Gaza Programming: 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 Danielle Spitzer at 202-320-6036 or SpitzerDM@state.gov for additional information.

F.3b. Special Provision For Performance In A Designated Combat Area And Future Contingency Operations (Currently Iraq And Afghanistan): Each federal assistance award within areas of combat operations or future contingency operation, as designated by the Secretary of Defense (currently Iraq and Afghanistan), over \$150,000 or providing for performance over 30 days must be registered in the Department of Defense maintained Synchronized Pre-deployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) system. Each federal assistance award shall be registered in SPOT before personnel deployment. The DoS SPOT Program Office can assist with entering awards in SPOT. Please send an email to AQMOps@state.gov for information. Information on how to register in SPOT and how to report the total number of recipient personnel deploying under each award will be contained in a Special Provision within each assistance award.

Recipients that do not utilize personnel who are performing a private security function; or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support can be entered through the SPOT aggregate functionality. Upon the award of a grant/and or cooperative agreement in a designated area of combat operations or future contingency operation (currently Iraq and Afghanistan), the Grants Officer or his/her designee will enter the following award information into SPOT to include (i) a brief description of the contract (to the extent consistent with security considerations); (ii) the total value of the contract; and (iii) whether the contract was awarded competitively. The Recipient should send updated deployment numbers for each award sent to the Grants Officer and his/her designee and the Department of State's SPOT program office on a quarterly basis as follows:

The Recipient is required to submit with the quarterly financial report submission information regarding the number of individuals receiving payment from the funds being granted under this award. This report is due 30 days after the calendar year quarter and 90 days after the award period end date and also should be sent to AQMOps@state.gov with the subject line "SPOT Quarterly Report -- Award Number". The following information shall be provided:

1. Total number of individuals receiving payment from the funds being granted:
 - a. Total Number U.S. Personnel Deployed:
 - b. Total Number Host Country Personnel:
 - c. Total Third Country Personnel Deployed:

These reports should be sent to AQMOps@state.gov. The SPOT program office will enter the numbers into SPOT.

Recipients utilizing personnel who are performing a private security function; or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support must be entered into SPOT individually with all required personal information. The recipient organization will designate a SPOT administrator who will obtain a SPOT company administrator account. Recipients of federal assistance awards shall register personnel in SPOT before deployment, or if already operational in the designated operational area, register personnel upon becoming an employee under the award and maintain current data in SPOT. Procedures on how to register in SPOT will be provided by the Grants Officer and his/her designee.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel. To the extent that such private security contractors (PSCs) are required, Recipients are required to ensure they adhere to Chief of Mission (COM) policies and procedures regarding the operation, oversight, and accountability of PSCs.

In a designated area of combat operations or future contingency operation, the term PSC includes any personnel providing protection of the personnel, facilities, property of a Recipient or sub-recipient at any level, or performing any other activity for which personnel are required to carry weapons in the performance of their duties.

As specific COM policies and procedures may differ in scope and applicability, recipients of federal assistance awards are advised to review post policies and procedures carefully in this regard and direct any questions to the Embassy Regional Security Office (RSO) via the Grants Officer Representative (GOR). Any exclusion to these policies must be granted by the COM via the RSO. COM policies and procedures may be obtained from the RSO via the GOR. Recipients of federal assistance awards are also advised that these policies and procedures may be amended from time to time at the post in response to changing circumstances.

F.4. Reporting Requirements: You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

- 1.) Performance Progress Reports (PPRs) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual reports shall be due 120 calendar days after the cooperative agreement 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 complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a Post Award Activity under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic.
- 2.) The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to SAMS Domestic, in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Cooperative Agreements/Grants. In the event you are having difficulty uploading reports and the ILMS help desk is not providing sufficient assistance, please email ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov.
- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award;

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Cecilia Kocinski-Mulder or Vincent Pickett in the Office of Academic Exchange Programs, ECA/A/E/MR, SA-5, 4th Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, by telephone at 202-655-1611 or 703-625-7670, or by email at Kocinski-MulderCP@state.gov or PickettVS@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

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 will be subject to periodic programmatic and financial reporting and evaluation requirements as outlined in the NOFO.

Matthew Lussenhop
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

February 25, 2021