

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY 2020 Alumni Thematic International Exchange Seminars (TIES)

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0006691

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.452

Key Date/Application Deadline: June 8, 2020

Executive Summary: The Office of Alumni Affairs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for the administration of the FY 2020 Alumni Thematic International Exchange Seminars (TIES). 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 approximately nine regional, sub-regional, or multiregional enrichment seminars for U.S. government-sponsored and U.S. government facilitated people-to-people exchange program alumni (“exchange alumni”). The cooperative agreement includes a small grants component to help participants take concrete actions as a result of their seminar experiences. ECA anticipates issuing a cooperative agreement of up to \$2,250,000.

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. 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.

Purpose: The purpose of this cooperative agreement is to enhance the U.S. Department of State’s engagement with exchange alumni from around the world in support of U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives. During the course of this award, the award recipient will conduct nine seminars on a range of thematic topics to be identified by ECA in consultation with U.S. Department of State stakeholders, including regional bureaus and U.S. embassies and consulates (“posts”). The award recipient will also manage a competitive grants program for teams of seminar participants and other alumni

that builds on the seminar theme and empowers seminar participants to be catalysts and force multipliers on the seminar theme within local communities.

Background: The Office of Alumni Affairs (ECA/P/A) leads and coordinates efforts to maintain relationships with alumni of U.S. government-sponsored people-to-people exchanges (“exchange alumni”). With millions of exchange alumni worldwide including over 350,000 Americans, ECA is committed to providing resources to sustain engagement with and tap into the energy, enthusiasm, and expertise of this influential audience; most are established or emerging leaders in their fields of interest. Working closely with U.S. Department of State stakeholders, ECA/P/A supports alumni programs that are strategic and designed to reinforce U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Goals: The mission of ECA/P/A is to advance U.S. foreign policy through alumni engagement. Alumni engagement is an integral component of the U.S. Department of State’s public diplomacy which generates maximum return on the U.S. government’s investment in exchange programs. Through the FY 2020 Alumni Thematic Exchange Seminars (TIES), ECA/P/A aims to:

1. Strengthen the U.S. Department of State’s ties to exchange alumni and build a sense of common identity among participants of U.S. government-sponsored and U.S. government-facilitated exchange programs.
2. Strengthen alumni voices and collaboration in support of major public diplomacy and U.S. foreign policy priorities.
3. Provide alumni participants current information about key foreign policy issues and leverage the expertise and enthusiasm of these established and emerging leaders to develop innovative solutions to address shared global challenges.
4. Build on the knowledge gained through their exchange experiences and help them access, create, and sustain networks that advance mutually beneficial priorities and contribute to the global economy.
5. Support alumni-driven initiatives that address shared global challenges and promote mutual understanding between the home communities of alumni and communities around the globe.

The first cooperative agreement to manage this activity was awarded in FY2015. To date, ECA/P/A has offered nineteen seminars around the world reaching nearly 700 alumni. Topics for the seminars have included, among others, media literacy, business and trade for women entrepreneurs, civic participation and public engagement, resilient communities, access to energy, stronger American cities, tackling addiction and global health, and combatting trafficking. Topics for the seminars are decided by ECA in collaboration with U.S. Department of State stakeholders.

Seminars: “Seminars” are defined as a set of learning, leadership, and networking activities for exchange alumni, focused on one specific topic or theme. Each seminar will also include an operational, skills-building component, such as project planning, monitoring and evaluation, grants writing, social media tools, to foster concrete alumni-driven initiatives that support U.S. foreign policy objectives. Each three- or four-day

seminar will foster networking among exchange alumni from a selected region, sub-region, or multiple regions, and comprise multiple components, drawing on expert speakers and trainers, group discussions, action-planning, and presentations by the participants.

Each seminar will be unique and will necessitate a different program model or design. The size, scope, and timing of each project should be designed with a flexible and collaborative approach in order to maximize program effectiveness and impact in terms of achieving the seminar objectives. In support of a rapid response model, applicants should demonstrate the ability to implement a seminar within three months after being provided the priority topic and seminar location.

Small Grants: “Grants” are funding opportunities following the enrichment seminar of up to \$10,000 per selected project. Participants will be eligible to compete for this small grant opportunity following the enrichment seminar. ECA/P/A and the award recipient will review all submitted proposals and hold a grants panel to recommend projects for funding. ECA/P/A will make the final selection of approved projects. The grants will support alumni efforts to apply their international exchange and seminar experience within their communities. The overall fund for grants under this cooperative agreement is approximately \$700,000.

Participants: "Participants" are defined as exchange alumni of any U.S. government-sponsored and U.S. government-facilitated exchange program from one or more selected region or sub-region of the world who participate in a seminar. Participants must be 18 years of age or older. Regional U.S. and international seminars will have approximately 40 attendees; global seminars will have approximately 70 attendees including approximately 10 from the United States. To the extent possible, each seminar will represent the diversity of the region and include women, minorities, and marginalized populations, including individuals with disabilities.

For foreign participants, in collaboration with ECA/P/A, posts in participating countries will recruit, screen, and nominate foreign exchange alumni to participate.

For U.S. citizen alumni, the application process will be managed by the award recipient, with ECA/P/A determining the final slate of seminar participants. The award recipient is expected to manage overall program logistics before, during and after the seminar with substantive input and guidance from ECA/P/A.

Organizational Capacity: Applicant organizations must demonstrate their capacity for conducting international educational and cultural exchanges, including managing all logistics (flights, lodging, per diem, transport, health insurance, etc.), supporting exchange alumni engagement activities that include short-term seminars focused on a range of different subject areas, and providing substantive programming for participants. Applicants should illustrate in their proposals the breadth of their experience working in alumni engagement and a record of flexibility and adaptability in programming under short timelines or challenging conditions. Proposals should include concrete examples in

which the organization has responded quickly to rapidly evolving circumstances, including, if possible, examples that demonstrate the ability to develop new international exchange programs, seminars, or alumni engagement activities in countries in which they have not previously worked.

In addition, applicants must demonstrate the breadth of their experience working with youth and emerging leaders, including support through the development of action plans and small grant opportunities. Proposals should include examples of how the applicant has worked with U.S. citizens and citizens of other countries. Applicant organizations must demonstrate the ability to oversee technical logistics for a competitive small grants program as well as transfer and monitor small grants for projects taking place in countries around the world, including the United States. Applicants should explain their awards management process, including identification of an online system that will be used for the lifecycle of nomination and grants.

Language Capacity: Seminars will be held in English, and selected alumni are required to have professional level English language proficiency.

Partner Organizations: Applicants should provide examples of organizations and individuals with whom they would collaborate and describe previous cooperative activities. One approach would be for a proposal to choose a hypothetical seminar theme based on a foreign policy priority topic, and spell out a proposed plan for developing the program, with examples of organizations or individuals upon whom the applicant would rely to develop the most appropriate substantive aspects of the program design.

U.S. Embassy Involvement: After a cooperative agreement is awarded, and once a location, priority topic, and make-up of participants (international or U.S. alumni or both) has been identified for each seminar, ECA/P/A will consult with the relevant U.S. Department of State stakeholders and U.S. embassy/consulate Public Affairs Section (PAS) to identify participants and determine extent of post engagement. The award recipient is expected to manage overall program logistics before, during, and after the seminar with substantive input and guidance from PAS and ECA/P/A.

The award recipient will process the DS-2019 forms for foreign participant travel to seminars held in the United States. This includes coordination with PAS for delivery to the participant.

Guidelines: The cooperative agreement will begin on or about September 1, 2020. The award period will be approximately 36 months in duration, and cover all aspects of program planning, Alumni Thematic International Exchange Seminars, and a small grants program for participant alumni. As the award recipient will not know the exact dates of the seminars until a newly approved seminar theme is officially agreed upon, applicants should propose at least one sample timeline and sample outline for a hypothetical seminar.

Applicants should propose to hold approximately nine seminars. Seminars over the three-year cooperative agreement period will total approximately three per year with a goal of hosting three seminars in the United States for U.S. citizen alumni (approximately 40 attendees per seminar), three regional or sub-regional seminars abroad for foreign citizen alumni of that region (approximately 40 attendees per seminar), and three multi-regional seminars to bring together U.S. citizen and foreign alumni (approximately 60 foreign attendees and approximately 10 from the United States per seminar). Single occupancy lodging, airfare, per diem and other incidental travel costs will be covered for each participant. The seminars must be completed prior to the anticipated end date of the award, September 1, 2023. Applicants should propose specific seminar dates in their proposals, but the exact timing may be altered through the mutual agreement of the U.S. Department of State and the award recipient, based on the flexible, rapid response approach preferred.

ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal project configurations, budgets, seminars, and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. In addition, ECA reserves the right to adjust the participating countries if conditions change in a selected location or if particular countries are identified as priorities for the U.S. Department of State.

A1. Substantial Involvement:

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine grant monitoring. ECA/P/A's activities and responsibilities for the FY 2020 Alumni Thematic International Exchange Seminars (TIES) are as follows:

1. Provide advice and assistance in the execution of all program components.
2. Provide clear guidance on the themes, region, and countries that will be the focus of each seminar.
3. Approve internal timeline to achieve each seminar roll-out.
4. Develop selection criteria and manage the recruitment and selection of foreign participants in coordination with regional bureaus, PAS, and other U.S. Department of State stakeholders. In the case of U.S. citizen alumni, develop selection criteria, and manage the recruitment and selection of the participants in coordination with the recipient organization.
5. Initiate and facilitate interaction within the U.S. Department of State, to include ECA, regional bureaus, embassies/consulates, and other stakeholders, as needed.
6. Identify potential speakers, trainers and any off-site locations, and approve final list.
7. Provide input and final approval of each seminar curricula, including speakers and trainers.
8. Approve promotional materials and final calendar of activities for each seminar.
9. Serve on the selection panel for the small grants program.
10. Approve final list of small grant recipients after each selection panel.

11. For U.S. grants recipients, monitor and evaluate the project, through regular communication with the award recipient and routine site visits. For foreign alumni, work with posts to monitor progress of project.
12. Provide feedback following each seminar and periodically throughout the cooperative agreement to identify areas of improvement.

A2. Recipient Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

1. Develop and execute a communications strategy and timeline to provide participants and PAS with program materials and logistical information prior to each seminar. Create a social media campaign that will run prior to and during the seminar to highlight the seminar topic and disseminate alumni stories. Use video and other tools to create shareable content and use online streaming capability to livestream parts of the seminar if possible.
2. Create and use a program-related domain (such as "AlumniTIES.com") for all email communications, social media, and website platforms. Use program-related branding for all communications.
3. Manage logistical arrangements and fees, including seminar site selection and contract(s), arranging all technical equipment, staffing, all travel, insurance, ground transportation, accommodations, group meals, and seminar organization for all participants.
4. Process form DS-2019 or "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status" for international participants traveling to seminars in the United States and coordinate delivery to and collaborate with posts.
5. Develop and implement a plan to monitor the participants' safety and well-being while traveling to and from the seminar and creating opportunities for participants to share potential issues and resolve them promptly.
6. Make proper arrangements for participants' religious observances and dietary needs.
7. Conduct an orientation for the seminars upon participants' arrivals at the host site.
8. Research, design and plan seminar curriculum and activities to develop the participants' knowledge and skill base for the thematic topic presented.
9. Identify speakers and trainers to assist in the facilitation of each seminar.
10. Research and identify potential organizations or locations for off-site visits in relation to the theme of the seminar.
11. Develop resources and assist participants in developing action plans and collaborative, innovative project proposals for the small grants program.
12. Facilitate a small grants program for participating exchange alumni, including the creation of supporting resources and participating a selection panel.
13. Oversee the responsible transfer and monitoring of funds to selected alumni for projects that take place in countries around the world.
14. Establish a reporting plan for recipients of the small grants program, and regularly update ECA with the results of alumni projects.

15. Facilitate, in coordination with ECA and U.S. embassies, continued engagement among the participants and offering opportunities to reinforce the ideas, values, and skills imparted during their exchange and seminar experience.
16. Collaborate with ECA and U.S. Embassies to design and implement an evaluation plan that assesses the short- and medium-term impact of the seminars on the participants.

B. Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description above.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2020

Approximate Total Funding: \$2,250,000

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Approximate Average Award: \$2,250,000

Floor of Award Range: none

Ceiling of Award Range: \$2,250,000

Anticipated Award Date: September 1, 2020

Anticipated Project Completion Date: September 1, 2023

Additional Information:

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.

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 D.3a and D.3c 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 \$2,250,000 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.) 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 the Office of Alumni Affairs, ECA/P/A, SA-5, Floor 1, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, Christiansonal@state.gov, 202-632-6453 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.

Please specify Amy Christianson 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.3o. “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. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Report: 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 award 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 program 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. 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://afsitsm.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.3g. 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. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of 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 award recipient 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-4E (Bldg. 3)
2430 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.3h. 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.3i. 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.

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.3j. 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.3k. 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.3l. Budget Format: 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.

The below budget format is provided as an aid in organizing the budget, it is suggested but not required as a submission format for your proposal budget.

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

1. **Travel:** International and domestic airfare; airline baggage and seat fees; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act.
2. **Per Diem.** For U.S.-based programming, organizations should use the published Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>. ECA requests applicants to budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed Federal per diem rates. Foreign per diem rates can be accessed at: https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp
3. **Consultants.** Consultants (i.e. trainers, speakers, etc.) may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Honoraria rates should not exceed \$250 per day per session. Organizations are encouraged to cost-share rates that would exceed that figure. Subcontracting organizations may also be employed, in which case the written agreement between the prospective award recipient and subrecipient should be included in the proposal. Such subawards should detail the division of responsibilities and proposed costs, and subcontracts should be itemized in the budget.
4. **Room Rental.** The rental of meeting space should not exceed \$250 per day per activity. Any rates that exceed this amount should be cost shared.
5. **Materials.** Proposals may contain costs to purchase, develop and translate materials for fellows. Costs for high quality translation of materials should be anticipated and included in the budget.
6. **Working Meal.** One working meal may be provided during U.S.-based and foreign-based components. Per capita costs for working meals may not exceed \$45/person, excluding room rental and other overhead charges. The number of invited guests may not exceed seminar participants by more than a factor of two-to-one.
7. **Wire Transfer Fees.** When necessary, applicants may include costs to transfer funds to foreign-based partner organizations. Award recipients are urged to research applicable taxes that may be imposed on these transfers by host governments.
8. **In-Country Travel Costs for Visa Processing Purposes.** Visas for participants to travel to the seminar host-country may be necessary, and applicants should plan to cover these costs. Applicants should also include costs for any travel associated with procuring visas, including travel for interviews, delivering or picking up passports, etc.

9. **Administrative Costs.** Costs necessary for the effective administration of the project may include salaries for employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the PSI. Proposals should show strong administrative cost sharing contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner and other sources. Award recipient staff travel should NOT be included in the exchange participant numbers.
10. **Insurance.** Travel and health insurance should be provided to all participants.
11. **Reasonable Accommodations.** Organizations should budget for the reasonable accommodations of participating individuals with disabilities. Proposals may allocate up to 5-7% of the total requested ECA award funds for this purpose.
12. **Post-Seminar Engagement and Alumni Small Grants Program.** Reasonable costs related to post-seminar engagement and alumni activities may be included. The proposal must include an outline of any proposed post-seminar engagement and alumni activities, including the facilitation of the Alumni Small Grants Program. Proposals should also demonstrate how the recipient organization will creatively utilize technology and online networking sites to enhance and amplify alumni programming.

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

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

Application Deadline Date: Monday, June 8, 2020

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.3p. 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.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 stakeholders, 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:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission.
2. **Program planning and ability to achieve program objectives:** A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. The agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. The objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
3. **Multiplier effect/impact:** Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.
4. **Support of Diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Proposals 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.
5. **Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. 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. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
6. **Project Evaluation:** Proposals 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. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports.
7. **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. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

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

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of Iran complies with requirements, please contact ECA/P/A Amy Christianson, (202) 632 6453, ChristiansonAL@state.gov, for additional information.

F.3b. Prohibition on the use of Federal Funds to Promote, Support, or advocate for the legalization or practice of Prostitution: The U.S. Government is opposed to prostitution and related activities, which are inherently harmful and dehumanizing, and contribute to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. None of the funds made available under this agreement may be used to promote, support, or advocate the

legalization or practice of prostitution. Nothing in the preceding sentence shall be construed to preclude assistance designed to ameliorate the suffering of, or health risks to, victims while they are being trafficked or after they are out of the situation that resulted from such victims being trafficked.

The recipient shall insert the foregoing provision in all sub-agreements under this award.

This provision includes express terms and conditions of the agreement and any violation of it shall be grounds for unilateral termination of the agreement by the Department of State prior to the end of its term.

F.3c. 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 Amy Christianson, (202) 632 6453
ChristiansonAL@state.gov for additional information.

F.3d. 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 90 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 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 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 4.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.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.

F.5. 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, contact: Amy Christianson, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Alumni Affairs, ECA/P/A, SA-5, 1st floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, 202-632-6453, Christiansonal@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 will be subject to periodic programmatic and financial reporting and evaluation requirements as outlined in the NOFO.

Marie Royce
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

April 10, 2020