

**Department of State**

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

**(NOFO): FY 2021 Online Professional English Network (OPEN) Program**

**Announcement Type:** New Cooperative Agreement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** SFOP0007752

**Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number:** 19.421

**Key Date/Application Deadline:** May 25, 2021

**Executive Summary:** The Office of English Language Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA/A/L) announces an open competition for the FY 2021 Online Professional English Network (OPEN) Program, which offers foreign English teaching professionals and language learners the opportunity for professional development through high-quality virtual programming, including online university-level Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) methodology courses, online English language learning courses, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), webinars, communities of practice, social media, virtual exchanges, and other types of engaging and innovative virtual learning.

In cooperation with ECA/A/L, the recipient will manage the selection, development, and delivery of appropriate online learning courses in the field of TESOL which will be offered to English language educators or learners on an easily accessible online Learning Management System (LMS). Courses, webinars, and other virtual programming may be offered globally, regionally, or to specific countries at the request of U.S. embassies. Courses and webinars will be developed by U.S. higher education institutions and/or U.S.-based TESOL professionals and will primarily include courses and content for English as a foreign language (EFL) educators to familiarize participants with U.S. student-centered teaching methods, introduce current methods and techniques in TESOL, and prepare participants to formally disseminate the newly acquired knowledge to their colleagues. Courses will also include topics for English language learners in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) topics, according to global and regional goals and priorities. All content produced for this program will be openly licensed with a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) License.

Pending the availability of FY 2021 funds, ECA/A/L anticipates approximately 3,000 EFL educators worldwide will participate in online courses under this award and an unlimited number of educators will benefit from the openly licensed virtual learning tools, webinars, MOOCs, and content developed under this award. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code, Section 26 U.S.C 501 (c) (3) may submit proposals to administer and manage the FY 2021 OPEN Program.

It is ECA/A/L's intent to award one cooperative agreement in the amount of \$8,000,000, pending the availability of FY 2021 funds, to an applicant that has the ability to achieve these objectives and provide the necessary infrastructure and experience conducting

online academic exchange programs. ECA/A/L reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Please see section B.) Federal Award Information, below for additional details.

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.

#### **Purpose:**

The OPEN Program offers professional development for EFL educators and other professionals as well as English language learners through online courses and other virtual learning tools and programming developed by accredited U.S. educational institutions and TESOL professionals. The courses and online content primarily introduce EFL teaching methods and techniques while offering participants the opportunity to engage in online learning that employs the latest in educational technology and provides direct access to U.S. experts in the field of TESOL. The courses and content may also address key mission goals and priorities for English language learners and educators, based on U.S. Department of State foreign policy goals and/or regional U.S. Embassy goals and priorities. Participants are expected to share their newly-acquired knowledge with their colleagues in their home countries and to share it with other participants and stakeholders around the world through an online Community of Practice (CoP) for alumni. U.S. embassies may also request alumni involvement in events, workshops, or other such programming with the goal of cascading new knowledge and providing new opportunities for leadership and training of trainers.

#### ***Program Categories:***

#### **Global Online Courses:**

The award recipient will issue sub-awards to accredited U.S. educational institutions through open competitions to develop and provide approximately eight online courses

appropriate for foreign EFL teachers of or for English language learners. These courses will include participants from multiple geographic regions in global, regional, or country-specific cohorts. Courses will be designed with the primary goal of familiarizing participants with U.S. student-centered teaching and learning methods and with current TESOL teaching methods and techniques, while preparing participants to formally disseminate the newly acquired knowledge to their colleagues. Courses may also include topics for English language learners in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) topics, according to global and regional goals and priorities. The courses must include appropriate content that provides participants insights into U.S. culture, society, and values.

The proposal must demonstrate the award recipient's capacity to draft a request for proposals (RFP) and the capacity to administer an open competition for issuing sub-awards to appropriate U.S. higher education institutions or TESOL professional associations. The award recipient may not issue a sub-award to itself to create or provide courses. The award recipient must explain how it will identify the topics of the courses to be provided based on the needs and priorities of ECA/A/L, U.S. embassies and specific regions and countries. In order to select appropriate courses, the award recipient should demonstrate that it has the appropriate staff with expertise in the field of TESOL, particularly in working with non-native English speaking teachers. The award recipient should also demonstrate that it has or will procure the appropriate tools and will have the appropriate staff or consultants with expertise in curriculum design, online instructional design, and graphic and video design.

The award recipient should submit a plan and timeline for the administration of an open competition, or competitions, to select sub-awards to design and deliver global online courses, which may include courses previously developed for the OPEN Program, for a series of academic quarters for the length of the award. The recipient, in collaboration with ECA/A/L and the sub-award recipients, should develop, maintain, or build upon strategies for participant placement in courses and for participant retention.

**Regional and Country-specific Online Course Offerings:**

Regional and country-specific course offerings will be managed through sub-awards or contracts issued by the recipient to accredited U.S. higher educational institutions through open competitions or to qualified consultants. The award recipient should conduct needs analyses in collaboration with ECA/A/L, Regional English Language Officers (RELOs), and U.S. embassies for both regional and country-specific course offerings as requested by ECA/A/L throughout the period of performance. Regional or country-specific course offerings will be provided online to meet the requests of U.S. embassies, as articulated in the needs analysis and with final approval from ECA/A/L. Such courses could involve repurposing Global Online Courses for a specific regional audience; taking advantage of an existing course through an individual or institution that is not among the Global Online Course providers; or reaching out to an institution or individual to develop a

course tailored to a specific context. The award recipient may not issue a sub-award or contract to itself to create or provide these courses.

The award recipient should submit a narrative outlining a comprehensive strategy and timeline for the administration and implementation of regional and country-specific course offerings, approximately five for the duration of the award. This strategy should include how, in coordination with ECA/A/L, the needs and requests of U.S. embassies will be assessed, and how courses addressing these needs will be implemented throughout the duration of this award. This strategy should also include how such courses may be used or adapted for global audiences after an initial iteration.

**Participants:**

Participants in GOCs and ROCs will be identified and/or selected by the U.S. embassies and consulates in participating countries, based on allocations determined by ECA/A/L with the final selection made by ECA/A/L. Each course will host approximately 25 participants with approximately 3,000 total participants during the length of this award, in addition to the unlimited number of participants who may access OER materials and virtual learning tools.

Participants\* should:

- Have the ability to complete academic work at a U.S. university level roughly equivalent to a minimum TOEFL score of 525/iBT 70
- Have an understanding of English technical terms relating to computers and the internet;
- Have regular access (4-5 times per week) to a reliable, up-to-date computer or mobile device with high-speed internet connectivity;
- Have basic technology skills related to email, internet searches, downloads/uploads, logins/passwords, and e-file use;
- Have the ability to type in English well enough to perform online tasks in real-time and submit written assignments in a timely manner;
- Have at least 8-10 hours per week to devote to the coursework;
- Be a citizen of, and reside in, the nominating country for the duration of the course, with some exceptions for extenuating circumstances; and
- Not hold dual citizenship in the United States.

\*These criteria are not related to MOOC, webinar, or social media participants.

The successful completion of an online learning program can be challenging due to several factors, such as the participants' level of digital literacy, insufficient access to reliable internet connectivity, and competing professional and personal obligations. The award recipient should submit a narrative outlining a comprehensive strategy for improving participant retention to maximize course completion rates.

**MOOCs:**

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) offerings will be managed by staff of the award recipient and/or through sub-awards or contracts issued by the recipient to accredited U.S. educational institutions and approved individuals through open competitions, sole-source contracts (when approved by ECA/A/L), or with qualified consultants. MOOCs may be based on GOCs or ROCs and adapted for self-paced or instructor-led courses open to an unlimited number of participants and housed on an open and easily accessible Learning Management System (LMS). MOOCs may also be created and implemented based on the requests of ECA/A/L and U.S. embassies.

The award recipient should submit a plan and timeline for the use of program staff to manage and implement MOOCs or the administration of an open competition, or competitions, to select sub-awards to design and deliver MOOCs for a series of academic quarters throughout the length of the award including a plan for approximately eight self-paced or facilitated MOOCs during the period of performance. The recipient should, in collaboration with ECA/A/L, develop strategies for ongoing promotion of MOOCs, participant retention, and alumni follow-on and engagement.

**Webinars:**

ECA/A/L has hosted the American English Live webinar series since 2010, and the award recipient will be a partner in the series implementation. The American English Live webinar series is an online professional development program for teachers currently broadcast via Facebook Live on the American English for Educators Facebook page. In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the award recipient will develop a calendar of American English Live webinars shared on one or more platforms that allow for the highest degree of global accessibility. In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the award recipient will also recruit and contract with U.S. TESOL professionals to prepare for and present each of these webinars.

The award recipient should submit a plan and timeline for recruitment, topic selection, presenter collaboration, presentation development, and announcement of webinar series throughout the length of the award with approximately 18 webinars throughout the duration of the award. The recipient should, in collaboration with ECA/A/L, develop strategies for promotion of webinars and participant follow-on and engagement. The timeline and plan for MOOCs, GOCs, ROCs, webinars, social media content, and the Community of Practice (CoP) can be submitted in one overall plan, if desired.

**Social Media:**

ECA/A/L hosts the American English at State and the American English for Educators Facebook pages as well as the American English YouTube channel. These platforms have a combined reach of over 4 million followers. In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the award recipient will strategize the incorporation of public diplomacy and TESOL themes

and create engaging content for these platforms, promoting English language learning and other U.S. embassy or D.C.-based content or opportunities upon request.

The award recipient should submit a plan and timeline for theme development and content creation as well as management and moderation of the social media platforms beginning in 2022 throughout the length of the award. The plan should include specific ways which the award recipient will assess the needs of U.S. embassies and current and potential audiences. The social media plan should include information on types of content and strategies for engagement based on potential needs assessment results, as well as strategies for engaging award recipient staff or approved consultants in executing this plan.

The award recipient, at the request of and in collaboration with ECA/A/L, may develop a plan and timeline for redeveloping the American English website or application (app), including options for obtaining an appropriate domain name, hosting of website or application, design, development and testing.

#### **Community of Practice (CoP):**

The award recipient will use, maintain and update as necessary the existing online Community of Practice (CoP) for OPEN alumni. The purpose of the online CoP is to ensure continued follow-on activity and alumni engagement, which insures that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events. In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the award recipient will develop strategies for maximizing participation on the CoP and create an engaging, dynamic, user-friendly, and visually appealing online CoP where alumni participants are encouraged to share resources and ideas as well as cascade knowledge and skills gained from online courses or webinars. The award recipient may also engage U.S. embassies or provide opportunities for stakeholders to participate on the CoP.

The award recipient should submit a plan and timeline for CoP engagement beginning in 2022 and throughout the length of the award. The plan should include specific ways which the award recipient will assess the needs of program alumni, U.S. embassies and current and potential audiences. The plan should include information on types of content and strategies for engagement based on potential needs assessment results. The award recipient must also explain the value added for activities and involvement on the CoP.

The timeline and plan for MOOCs, GOCs, ROCs, webinars, social media content, and the Community of Practice (CoP) can be submitted in one overall plan, if desired.

#### **Data Management:**

The award recipient will use, maintain, and update as necessary the existing LMS, which is uniformly utilized for all online course offerings through the OPEN Program. The recipient will be responsible for ensuring ongoing evaluation of the efficacy of the LMS . If a significant improvement to the program could be made by transferring to a different

platform or by making significant changes to the current platform, the award recipient may do so, with ECA/A/L approval. This LMS must accommodate participants in low-bandwidth contexts, while offering participants access to various collaborative multi-media tools during the courses, such as discussion forums or videos. The LMS is customized specifically for the OPEN Program. The LMS should not be tied to any one institution, as the system must be accessible to multiple institutions and individually-contracted instructors. This system must be accessible at all times to U.S. embassy and ECA/A/L staff involved in nominating and selecting participants, as well as monitoring the online courses.

The award recipient will also use, maintain, and update as necessary the existing application and registration portal that allows U.S. embassies to nominate and enroll participants and track participant progress through the OPEN Program. The application and registration portal must remain connected to the LMS. With guidance from ECA/A/L, the award recipient must electronically maintain and regularly update applicant and participant data, and protect personally identifiable information using cyber-secure data collection processes. The management and sharing of this data must continuously be updated and improved to meet the reporting and story-telling demands, monitoring and evaluation requirements and requests of ECA/A/L and U.S. Embassy stakeholders. The award recipient should provide technical assistance and periodic trainings (virtual and/or face-to-face) for ECA/A/L and U.S. embassy staff on how to use the system and should strive to build and maintain a system that is intuitive and user friendly.

### **Open Educational Resources:**

At the direction of ECA/A/L, the recipient organization will create or issue sub-awards or contracts to accredited U.S. educational institutions and approved individuals through open competitions, or with qualified consultants, to create openly-accessible online English language teaching and learning tools, which may include MOOCs, webinars, course materials, course modules, communities of practice, digital libraries, and other online methods of learning. Open educational resources (OERs) are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and repurposing by others. OERs include full courses, course materials, course modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge. OERs may be enriched by utilizing OPEN Program alumni in supporting roles, such as a moderator of a MOOC, a facilitator of a webinar or as a contributor to a community of practice. The award recipient will be expected to provide ECA/A/L with access to OERs created during the program at any time during the award. This will allow ECA/A/L to innovatively address additional virtual learning opportunities that may arise.

The award and sub-award recipients will collaborate with ECA/A/L and Creative Commons to license all online courses with the most recent CC BY license to ensure the courses and materials developed with this award will have a significant multiplier effect,

be cost-effective, and encourage innovation in the development of new learning materials. As a condition of the FY 2021 OPEN Program award, all work (except for computer software source code, discussed below) created with the support of the award and any sub-awards will be required to be licensed under a CC BY license. Work that must be licensed in this manner includes new content created using sub-awards; modifications made to pre-existing sub-recipient-owned content using sub-awards; and new works and modifications made to pre-existing works commissioned from third parties using sub-awards. This license will allow subsequent users to copy, adapt, distribute, and transmit the licensed work, and will require users to attribute the work in the manner specified by the award recipient. Notice of the license shall be affixed to the work. For general information on CC BY, please visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>. The award recipient may also contract with Creative Commons for services, such as technical assistance, implementation, and on-going maintenance associated with CC BY licensing.

### **Micro-credentialing Pathways**

In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the recipient organization may create micro-credentialing pathways to engage participants and alumni in further developing their professional skills through higher level training of trainers courses and other professional development opportunities globally and/or in conjunction with U.S. embassies to train other educators and cascade new knowledge. The recipient organization may provide badging related to participation in webinars, GOCs, ROCs, and/or MOOCs that would create a pathway for participants to receive honors and recognition for participating in multiple opportunities and to receive training to train other teachers. The award recipient may also contract with a badging software company or institutions for services, such as technical assistance, implementation, and on-going maintenance associated with micro-credentialing and pathway building.

**Virtual Exchanges:** As requested by ECA/A/L, the recipient may conduct virtual exchanges or may issue a sub-award(s) to another/other organization(s) through an open competition. Sub-recipients may include U.S. public and private non-profit, non-governmental organizations, and accredited U.S. colleges and universities. The recipient organization may plan, conduct, and fund a virtual exchange for participants identified and/or selected by the U.S. embassies and consulates in participating countries, based on allocations determined by ECA/A/L with the final selection made by ECA/A/L.

### **A1. Substantial Involvement:**

In a cooperative agreement, ECA/A/L is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring, as follows:

### **Grant Management and Program Administration Responsibilities:**

- Providing overall program and policy design and direction;
- Collaborating with the recipient organization on the design and development of the overall approach to the Online Professional English Network (OPEN) program, the course development process, the identification of the topics of the courses to be provided based on the needs of U.S. embassies and specific regions and countries, the determination of program participant allocations for each region, and developing strategies for participant placement in courses and/or virtual exchanges and for participant retention;
- Collaborating on and approving Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to solicit appropriate courses or virtual exchange opportunities through sub-awards from accredited U.S. higher education institutions and/or through independent contractors or organizations;
- Giving final approval of all sub-awards and contracts;
- Approving all major personnel changes in the recipient organization that are directly involved with this award;
- Approving the selection criteria, topics, academic level, and final offerings for all courses and virtual exchanges;
- Assigning scholarship allocations to U.S. embassies;
- Determining revisions to programs as needed, in cooperation with the recipient;
- Monitoring the administration of the award, including monitoring all online courses and activities the recipient administers;
- Identifying the need for consultants and/or staff to be hired by the recipient to create, curate, and copy edit OER content for publication and social media purposes, identifying or approving the selection of consultants and approving their assignments;
- Inviting U.S. embassies to request the development and implementation of online courses for their regions;
- Inviting RELOs to allocate participant slots for Global Online Courses throughout their regions;
- Inviting RELOs and U.S. embassies to recruit and nominate participants to participate in and complete OPEN courses;
- Reviewing and analyzing the potential of online course development projects and distribution plans, courses, and materials to improve teaching capacity and professional and language development for English language teachers and learners overseas and to promote the Bureau's goals;
- Analyzing the prospective impact of course development, implementation, and alumni outreach on host-country English teaching and learning institutions and English language outreach and the likelihood of projects meeting host-country institutional needs;
- Approving the provision of regional or country-specific online course offerings to meet the requests of U.S. embassies;

- Approving virtual events, travel, and/or outreach for recipient organization staff to higher education institutions, educational technology firms, and related conferences and events;
- Monitoring program activities and making recommendations for improvement.

#### **Technical Oversight Requirements:**

- Approving data management system(s), LMS, and CoP platform and coordinating with the recipient to ensure systems are customized for the OPEN Program and meet the reporting needs of ECA/A/L and U.S. embassies;
- Approving all publicity for the program to ensure the program is clearly identified as a U.S. Department of State initiative;
- Ensuring that policies and implementation practices are put into place to license all online courses with the most recent CC BY License to ensure that the courses and materials developed with this award (except for computer software source code, discussed below) will have a significant multiplier effect, be cost-effective, and encourage innovation in the development of new learning materials;
  - For general information on CC BY, please visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>;
- Collaborating with the recipient organization on the design, development, training, and necessary updates to the OPEN Program CoP;
- Approving the recipient organization's open competition for and issuing of a contract under the award or sub-award to a website/application development company to design, develop, and test a new American English website and/or application;
  - If requested by ECA/A/L, a contract under the award or sub-award will include obtaining a domain name and hosting the website/application throughout the period of performance;
- Collaborating with the recipient organization on the design, development, training, and necessary updates to the American English website/application.

#### **U.S. embassies are responsible for managing the Online Professional English Network (OPEN) Program in-country. The role of the U.S. embassies and consulates includes:**

- Recruiting, identifying, and/or selecting participants to take part in Global Online Courses; Regional or Country-Specific Courses; webinars, MOOCs and/or virtual exchanges, if conducted;
- Nominating participants to take part in OPEN courses through the OPEN Program nomination portal (participant nomination and tracking system);
- Developing course development proposals for regional or country-specific online course development;

- Initiating, planning, and conducting OPEN alumni events, which could include the following: alumni conferences and/or virtual or face-to-face meetings, certificate issuing and ceremonies, and regional social media engagement.
- Promoting Massive Open Online Courses and other related virtual exchange programming created through this program as desired and relevant to potential participants.

## **A2. Recipient Responsibilities:**

**The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:**

### **1. Course Development and Implementation for Global Online Courses, Regional Online Courses, and Massive Open Online Courses**

- In coordination with ECA/A/L, assessing U.S. embassies' needs for online English language teaching and learning courses, and soliciting and selecting appropriate courses that address those needs;
- Identifying the topics of the courses to be provided, in collaboration with ECA/A/L, based on the needs of U.S. embassies and specific regions and countries;
- Managing the RFP process for issuing sub-awards to accredited U.S. higher education institutions and individual contractors to deliver online courses for EFL teachers or learners overseas;
- Seeking final approval from ECA/A/L of all sub-awards and contracts;
- Managing the selection, development, and delivery of appropriate online learning courses in the field of TESOL which will be offered to English language educators, other professionals, or learners and for ESP courses as requested by U.S. Embassies;
- Issuing sub-awards to accredited U.S. higher education institutions;
- Managing sub-award recipients in the development and delivery of online professional development courses, including ensuring that materials and syllabi are submitted by sub-award recipients by the established deadlines for ECA/A/L approval;
- In coordination with ECA/A/L, developing a plan to be implemented with the sub-award recipients for participant placement in courses and participant retention; seeking ECA/A/L's guidance and approval in the selection and placement of participants based on nominations from U.S. embassies;
- Reviewing, analyzing, and approving the curricula, the syllabi, and the materials of proposed courses to ensure they meet program guidelines, including OER guidelines, Instructional Design and Online Learning guidelines, innovative and engaging graphic and video design, and TESOL guidelines;
- Communicating and working with U.S. embassies to resolve participant issues, including connectivity, academic level, etc.;

- Periodically conducting a needs analysis in collaboration with ECA/A/L, RELOs, and U.S. embassies for Global Online Courses;
- Ensuring that the courses developed through sub-awards include appropriate content that provides participants insights into U.S. culture, society, and values;
- Recruiting and maintaining a team of appropriate staff with expertise in the field of TESOL, particularly in working with non-native English-speaking teachers;
- Seeking approval from ECA/A/L and the assigned grants officer for key personnel changes;
- Collaborating with ECA/A/L and Creative Commons to license all online courses with the most recent CC BY License to ensure that the courses and materials developed with this award will have a significant multiplier effect, be cost-effective, and encourage innovation in the development of new learning materials;
  - Notice of the license shall be affixed to the work. For general information on CC BY, please visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>;
  - When necessary, contracting with Creative Commons for services, such as technical assistance, implementation, and on-going maintenance associated with CC BY licensing;
- In collaboration with ECA/A/L, creating micro-credentialing pathways to engage participants and alumni in further developing their professional skills through higher level training of trainers courses and opportunities globally and/or in conjunction with U.S. embassies to further their engagement by training other educators and professionals and cascading new knowledge;
- When necessary, contracting with digital badge providers for services, such as technical assistance, implementation, and on-going maintenance associated with digital badging, micro-credentialing, and learner pathways.

## **2. Reporting and Documentation Responsibilities:**

- Developing and implementing a strategic communication plan in close coordination with ECA/A/L;
- Submitting regular updates to ECA/A/L, as well as required program reports by the established deadlines; providing additional ad hoc reporting as requested and as appropriate;
- Informing and consulting with ECA/A/L about the administration of the program, any program or participant-related problems or deficiencies, and the progress of necessary actions;
- Connecting ECA/A/L and all sub-award recipients, such as U.S. universities and institutions, consultants, technical vendors, and LMS partners to ensure that all sub-awarded recipients recognize their role in implementing a U.S. Department of State-funded program and aligning with the goals and vision of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs;

- Drafting and finalizing official documentation, e.g. sub-agreements and Memoranda of Understanding, before disbursing funds to universities or individual contracts;
- Tracking the entire sub-award and contractor process, e.g. proposals, official documents, reports, and disbursements in addition to sending reminders about when reports are due and overdue;
- Managing all ECA/A/L funds for Online Professional English Network (OPEN) activities, including submitting required reports to ECA/A/L by the established deadlines;
- Ensuring existing ECA/A/L educational materials are integrated into course materials and syllabi, as appropriate (see <http://americanenglish.state.gov/>). The award recipient will also seek guidance on collaborating with other ECA/A/L programs, such as the English Language Fellow and Specialist Programs and the English Access Microscholarship Program;
- Reviewing participant evaluations of courses as well as evaluations of participants by course instructors, and providing ECA/A/L an analysis of the evaluations;
- Working with award recipient staff, sub-award recipients and individual contractors to ensure that recommendations based on the evaluations are implemented.

### **3. Data Management and Technical Oversight**

- Managing, creating, and/or improving information-sharing tools [e.g., the LMS, program database, nomination and reporting portal, CoP, webinars, social media, etc.] for the OPEN Program. The information-sharing tools must be easy to access and updates must be made in a timely manner. Data must be maintained in a way that will enable the recipient to provide ECA/A/L with information on the OPEN Program immediately upon request;
- Ensuring that communications and database information protects personally identifiable information according to ECA/A/L guidelines;
- Researching, developing, and producing OERs for English language teaching and learning in response to the articulated needs of ECA/A/L; coordinating and supporting the deployment of these resources overseas, including the purchase and shipping of equipment, as necessary; and managing professional development activities to allow educators abroad to effectively use these resources;
- Drafting and clearing all public advertisements, newsletters, course syllabi, handouts, course materials, webpages, and any OERs with ECA/A/L before dissemination to ensure their proper identification as a U.S. Department of State initiative and adherence to ECA/A/L guidelines;
- Using, maintaining, and updating as necessary the existing Canvas LMS, which is uniformly utilized for all online course offerings through OPEN;

- This LMS must accommodate participants in low-bandwidth contexts, while offering participants access to various collaborative multi-media tools during the courses, such as discussion forums or videos. The LMS is customized specifically for OPEN. The LMS should not be tied to any one institution, as the system must be accessible to multiple institutions and individually contracted instructors. The LMS should include communities of practice for participants and alumni that facilitate the exchange of teaching and learning content and ideas via a global network of OPEN participants. This system must be accessible at all times to U.S. embassy and ECA/A/L staff involved in nominating and selecting participants, as well as monitoring the online courses;
- Using, maintaining, and updating as necessary the existing application and registration mechanism (currently referred to as the portal) that allows U.S. embassies to nominate and enroll participants and track participant progress through the OPEN Program;
- Using, maintaining, and updating as necessary the existing online CoP for the OPEN Program;
- Providing technical assistance and periodic trainings (virtual and/or face-to-face) for ECA/A/L and U.S. embassy staff on how to use any and all systems, databases, platforms, course materials, etc. related to the OPEN Program.

#### **4. Open Educational Resources:**

- At the direction of ECA/A/L, creating or issuing sub-awards or contracts to accredited U.S. higher education institutions and approved individuals through open competitions, or with qualified consultants, to create openly-accessible online English language teaching and learning tools, which may include MOOCs, webinars, course materials, course modules, communities of practice, digital libraries, virtual exchanges, and other online methods of learning;
- Providing technical assistance and periodic trainings (virtual and/or face-to-face) for ECA/A/L staff, U.S. embassy staff, and current and former program participants on how to use and/or adapt OERs.

#### **5. Participant Retention:**

- Submitting a narrative outlining a comprehensive strategy for improving participant retention to maximize course completion rates;
- Submitting a narrative outlining a comprehensive strategy for increasing alumni engagement to maximize participant follow-on and the cascading of information from courses and programming.

#### **6. The Community of Practice (CoP):**

- In collaboration with ECA/A/L and the sub-awarded recipient, using, maintaining, and updating as necessary the online CoP;
- In collaboration with ECA/A/L, strategizing for maximum engagement and quality of User Interface for the online CoP;
- Ensuring that the online CoP is mobile-friendly and easily accessible in low-bandwidth contexts;
- Providing technical assistance and periodic trainings (virtual and/or face-to-face) for ECA/A/L staff, U.S. embassy staff, and current and former program participants on how to use the CoP.

### **7. Social Media**

- In collaboration with ECA/A/L, strategizing, planning, creating content and events, moderating, and managing the Office of English Language Programs' flagship social media accounts, such as the American English at State Facebook page, the American English for Educators Facebook page, the American English YouTube channel, and the Teachers' Corner Facebook page, and any other social media accounts upon request;
- Reporting on social media statistics and trends and reflecting on successes and lessons learned for future social media strategies, methods, and content creation;
- Researching and investigating other tools and platforms for social media engagement and proposing their use as appropriate.

### **8. The American English Website/Application:**

- If requested by ECA/A/L, collaborating with ECA/A/L to develop a plan and timeline for redeveloping the American English website or application (app), including options for obtaining an appropriate domain name, hosting of website or application, design, development and testing;
  - Administering an open competition for issuing a contract under the award or a sub-award to a website or app development company, to design, develop, and test a new American English website or app;
  - Issuing a sub-award(s) or contract to selected website development company to host, design, develop, and test a new American English website or app. If requested by ECA/A/L, sub-award or contract will include obtaining domain name and hosting website throughout the period of performance;
  - In collaboration with ECA/A/L and the sub-awarded recipient, maintaining and updating as necessary the American English website or app throughout the period of performance.

### **9. Virtual Exchanges**

- Upon request, collaborating with ECA/A/L to conduct virtual exchanges or issue a sub-award(s) to another/other organization(s) through an open competition to

conduct virtual exchanges for participants selected by U.S. Embassies and/or ECA/A/L.

**10. Conference and TESOL Convention involvement:**

- In collaboration with ECA/A/L, strategizing, organizing, and arranging for award recipient staff participation (whether in-person or virtually) in domestic or international conferences related to TESOL and educational technology to enhance award recipient staff professional development, to promote the OPEN program to U.S. universities and institutions, and/or to support alumni participation in such events.

**B. Federal Award Information:**

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

**Fiscal Year Funds:** FY 2021

**Approximate Total Funding:** \$8,000,000, pending the availability of funds

**Approximate Number of Awards:** One

**Approximate Average Award:** \$8,000,000, pending the availability of funds

**Floor of Award Range:** None.

**Ceiling of Award Range:** \$8,000,000, pending the availability of funds

**Anticipated Award Date:** September 30, 2021, pending the availability of funds

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** December 31, 2024

Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this grant or cooperative agreement for two 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 \$8,000,000 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 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 the Office of English Language Programs, ECA/A/L, SA-5, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, 202-632-9275, bainke@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.

Please specify Program Officer Katherine Bain 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.3p. "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](http://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 (FAPIS):** 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 FAPIS (see 41 U.S.C. 2313) and accessible through SAM.gov. If an Applicant is currently in FAPIS, 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 FAPIS, 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](mailto: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 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.

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.

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.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 that are not course or webinar-based to complement the 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 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. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

**D.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:**

***Program Costs:***

1. Sub-awards to accredited educational institutions to develop and deliver online courses;
2. Contracts with qualified individuals to develop and deliver open educational resources, webinars, and/or online courses;
3. Contracts to maintain and enhance the information technology suite, including but not limited to the LMS, CoP, and knowledge management system;
4. Certificates and digital badges design and development;
5. Social media graphic, video, and event design and development;
6. OER development costs (for example, MOOCs, online learning tools, and other virtual learning programs);
7. Alumni engagement programs, including activities related to the annual TESOL conference and the Community of Practice;
8. Outreach activities, including but not limited to travel and/or participation by staff in virtual or in-person domestic or international conferences and/or events.

***Administrative Costs:***

1. Staff salaries and benefits. Each staff person, his/her position and location must be listed separately. Provide the percentage of his/her total time spent on the program.
2. Facilities;

3. Communications (i.e., telephone, fax, postage, email, digital video conferences);
4. Office supplies

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

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

Application Deadline Date: May 25, 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](mailto: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. Program planning and ability to achieve program objectives:**

A detailed and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. The work plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. The proposal should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.

#### **2. Multiplier effect/impact and follow-on activities:**

The proposed activities should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages. The proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity and alumni engagement, which insures that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.

### **3. 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.

### **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:**

Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program's goals.

### **6. 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.

## **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](http://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. 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; 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](mailto:ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov).

- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award;

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.3h. 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.

### **G. Agency Contacts**

For questions about this announcement, contact: Katherine Bain, U.S. Department of State, Office of English Language Programs, ECA/A/L, SA-5, Floor 4, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, 202-632-9275, bainke@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.

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

March 5, 2021