

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Request for Grant Proposals: FY-2015

Jóvenes en Acción Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAPEC-15-005

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.415

Application Deadline: January 16, 2015

Executive Summary:

The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division, of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for the FY 2015 *Jóvenes en Acción* (Youth in Action), an exchange program for Mexican high school students. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to provide participants with a four-week summer exchange program in the United States focused on civic education, community service, and youth leadership development and to support the implementation of service projects in their home communities. This program will be funded as a joint initiative between the U.S. Department of State, the Mexican government, and the private sector. U.S. Embassy Mexico City (or an implementing partner of its choosing) will recruit, screen, and select the participants. ECA funding will support U.S.-based activities for approximately 20-25 participants to take place during summer 2015. U.S. Embassy Mexico City anticipates additional funding to increase the total number of participants to 100 students; proposals should indicate the applicant's ability in hosting up to 100 students and managing funding from multiple sources. Pending the availability of funds, it is the Bureau's intent to award one cooperative agreement for one base year plus two option years for an estimated total amount of \$600,000. Please see section II 'Award Information' below for additional details.

I. Funding Opportunity Description:

Authority:

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

Background:

In 2010, U.S. Embassy Mexico City created a new youth development program called *Jóvenes en Acción* (Youth in Action), which offered Mexican high school students the opportunity to develop their leadership and civic engagement skills through intensive workshops in the United States. Launched as a joint initiative between the U.S. Department of State, the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education and the private sector, the pilot program sent 50 Mexican

students to the United States during their summer vacation. The number of participating students has increased each year, currently at 100 students.

ECA funding will support *Jóvenes en Acción* and bring approximately 20-25 Mexican high school students to the United States for a four-week exchange in the summer of 2015 focused on civic education, community service, and youth leadership development. Subthemes that explore these overarching themes should be added, such as how local communities can develop a culture of lawfulness by addressing problems related to gangs, violence, substance abuse, bullying, human rights, or social disintegration. Participants should engage in a variety of activities such as workshops on leadership and service, community site visits related to the program themes and subthemes (specifically, their community service projects), interactive training, presentations, visits to high schools, supplementary English language classes, local cultural activities, and other activities designed to achieve the program's stated goals. Multiple opportunities for participants to interact meaningfully with their American peers must be included. Follow-on activities with the participants are an integral part of the program, as the students apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired by planning and carrying out service projects in their home communities.

The goals of the program are to:

- 1) Promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of Mexico;
- 2) Prepare youth leaders to become responsible citizens and contributing members of their communities; and
- 3) Nurture a cadre of students to be actively engaged in addressing issues of concern in their schools and communities upon their return home, and to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to become citizen activists.

The objectives of the program are for participants to:

- 1) Demonstrate a better understanding of the elements of a participatory democracy as practiced in the United States;
- 2) Demonstrate critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership skills; and
- 3) Demonstrate skill at developing project ideas and planning a course of action to bring the projects to fruition.

The primary themes of the program are:

- 1) Civic Education (Citizen Participation, Grassroots Democracy, Rule of Law, Anti-Bullying, Respect for Human Rights, and other mission priorities);
- 2) Community Service; and
- 3) Youth Leadership Development.

Applicant organizations must focus on these primary themes. Subthemes, as outlined above, will serve to illustrate the more abstract concepts of the primary themes.

Using these goals, objectives, and themes, applicant organizations should identify their own specific and measurable outputs and outcomes based on the project specifications provided in this solicitation. Proposals should indicate how recipients will achieve the short-term program

objectives, and how these objectives will contribute to the achievement of the stated long-term goals.

Guidelines:

This program will be funded as a joint initiative between the U.S. Department of State, the Mexican government and the private sector. The total amount of ECA funding is \$200,000 for 20-25 students each year, pending the availability of funds and successful performance; however, U.S. Embassy Mexico City anticipates additional funding to come from multiple sources to increase the total number of participants to 100 students. Proposals should indicate the applicant's ability in hosting up to 100 students each year and managing funding from multiple sources.

It is anticipated that the ECA cooperative agreement will begin on April 1, 2015. The base year award period will be approximately 18 months in duration and will cover all aspects of the program planning of U.S.-based exchange activities. Planning and preparation will start in early 2015, the exchange will take place during the summer of 2015, and follow-up activities will be managed by the Embassy or through an Embassy-selected implementing partner. Proposals may include travel for one individual to travel to Mexico to participate in follow-on activities.

Applicants should propose to host one group of approximately 20-25 participants, with the capacity to increase it to 100 participants. The U.S.-based exchange should take place during a four-week period in July/August 2015, depending on Mexican school schedules. Applicants should propose specific exchange dates in their proposals, but the exact timing may be altered through the mutual agreement of the Department of State and the award recipient.

Applicants must propose a plan to divide the large delegation of participants into smaller cohorts for most of the exchange activities. This will ensure that all participants actively take part in the exchange and that program staff can adequately monitor the safety and well-being of the participants. Applicants are encouraged to hold the welcome and closing orientations with the entire delegation. Applicants are also encouraged to be creative and flexible in making arrangements that will meet the program goals.

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

In pursuit of the goals outlined above, the award recipient will be responsible for the following:

Orientations: Provide updated pre-departure materials and information about the U.S. program to help the U.S. Embassy, participants, and their families in preparation for the exchange; plan to attend the pre-departure briefing in Mexico City a few days prior to the start of the exchange. Also, provide orientations for those participating from the host communities, including host families.

Logistics: Manage all logistical arrangements, adult accompaniment on the international flight, domestic and international travel, ground transportation, accommodations, group meals, and

disbursement of stipends. Proposals should include staff travel to Mexico to participate in pre-departure orientation and debriefing upon return from the U.S. in August. Proposals may include travel for a staff member to participate in follow-up activities, which may be organized by the Embassy or a local implementing partner, such as follow-up meetings during the year, and the final wrap up in April/May.

Exchange Activities: Design and plan four-weeks of exchange activities that provide a creative and substantive program that develops the youth participants' knowledge and skill base in civic education, community service, and youth leadership development. The exchange will take place in Washington, D.C. and in one or two other communities. The exchange will focus primarily on interactive activities, practical experiences, and other hands-on opportunities that provide a substantive experience on the specified program themes. Some activities should be community-based, and the projects will involve as much sustained interaction with U.S. peers as possible. Cultural, social, and recreational activities will balance the schedule. The first week of the exchange should include intensive English language workshops to help students gain confidence in their speaking ability and ensure they receive maximum benefit from all other program content.

Accommodations: Arrange home stays for the participants in the United States with properly screened and briefed American families for part of the exchange period. Criminal background checks (including a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry) must be conducted for each member of the host family household who are 18 years of age or older. Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) for more details on host family screening and placement.

Monitoring: Develop and implement a plan to monitor the participants' safety and well-being during the exchange and to create opportunities for participants to share potential issues and resolve them promptly. The award recipient will be required to provide proper staff supervision and facilitation to ensure that the teenagers have safe and pedagogically rich programs. Staff will assist the youth with cultural adjustments, provide societal context to enhance learning, and counsel students as needed.

Follow-on Activities: Provide guidance and support to participants while in the U.S. by advising and supporting them in planning the implementation of community service projects, and offering opportunities to reinforce the ideas, values and skills imparted during the exchange. Exchange participants should return home from the exchange prepared to implement projects that serve a need in their schools or communities. To amplify program impact, proposals should present creative and effective ways to address the project themes, for both program participants and their peers.

Evaluation: Design and implement an evaluation plan to assess the U.S. portion of the program on the participants as well as on host and home communities.

Participants:

U.S. Embassy Mexico City (or a local implementing partner of their choosing) will recruit, screen, and select the participants. Although the award recipient is not expected to be involved in the participant selection process, it may serve in an advisory role, as needed.

The selection process will focus on non-elite Mexicans between the ages of 15 and 17 who attend public or private high schools and can demonstrate strong leadership potential as well as a commitment to community service and academic achievement. Special consideration will be given to students who have displayed such qualities while growing up in communities acutely impacted by gangs, violence, and drug-related crime. An intermediate level of English proficiency will be required to ensure participants benefit from workshops and peer-to-peer interaction. Note that groups of 4-5 students will apply together as a team and must submit project proposals as part of their program application, so they will come prepared with basic project ideas at the start of the program. The role of the exchange is to help participants translate these ideas into concrete, implementable plans.

Organizational Capacity:

Applicant organizations should demonstrate their capacity for conducting international youth exchanges, focusing on three areas of competency: (1) provision of projects that address the goals, objectives, and themes outlined in this document; (2) age-appropriate programming for youth; and (3) previous experience working on programs in Mexico. Applicants need not have organizational capacity in Mexico, as the U.S. Embassy (or a local organization of its choosing) will serve as the in-country partner. The proposal narrative must also indicate the applicant's ability in hosting a larger exchange (approximately 100 total participants each summer) should additional funding become available, and clearly explain and demonstrate the capacity for doing so.

U.S. Embassy Involvement:

U.S. Embassy Mexico City (or a local implementing partner of its choosing) will recruit, screen, and select the participating high school students; provide pre-departure briefings; facilitate visas; and monitor implementation of community service projects in Mexico. Once a cooperative agreement is awarded, the recipient must consult regularly with the Public Affairs Section of U.S. Embassy Mexico City and the ECA Program Office throughout the development and implementation of the exchange. The proposal narrative must clearly state this commitment.

Please note:

The ECA award for the *Jóvenes en Acción* Program will take the form of a cooperative agreement with the award recipient. In a cooperative agreement, the Department of State is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. The Department's (ECA and PAS Mexico City) activities and responsibilities for the *Jóvenes en Acción* Program are as follows:

- 1) Provide advice and assistance in the execution of all program components.
- 2) Manage the recruitment and selection of the participants, provide pre-departure briefings, and oversee follow-up activities.
- 3) Issue DS-2019 forms and J-1 visas for the foreign participants. All foreign participants will travel on a U.S. Government designation for the J Exchange Visitor Program.

- 4) Facilitate interaction within the Department of State, to include ECA, the regional bureau, and U.S. Embassy Mexico City.
- 5) Arrange meetings with Department of State officials in Washington, D.C. and Mexico.
- 6) Approve publicity materials and final calendar of exchange activities.
- 7) Monitor and evaluate the program, through regular communication with the award recipient and possibly one or more site visits.
- 8) Perform an annual performance evaluation/review. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds are conditions of continued administration of the program and execution of all option years.

Additional Information:

Award recipients will retain the name “Jóvenes en Acción” to identify the exchange program. All materials, publicity, and correspondence related to the program will acknowledge this as a joint initiative between the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy Mexico City, the Mexican government, and any private sector partners. The Bureau will retain copyright use of and be allowed to distribute materials related to this program as it sees fit.

The organization must inform the ECA Program Office and the U.S. Embassy Mexico City of its progress at each stage of the project’s implementation in a timely fashion, and will be required to obtain approval of any significant program changes in advance of their implementation.

The proposal must demonstrate how it will meet the stated objectives. The proposal narrative should provide detailed information on the major project activities, and applicants should explain and justify their programmatic choices. Projects must comply with J-1 visa regulations for the International Visitor and Government Visitor category. Please be sure to refer to the complete Solicitation Package – this RFGP, the POGI, and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) – for further information.

Proposal narratives should include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional option years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base year program, with the understanding that the program design, duration and participant numbers would be similar when/if the subsequent two option years are exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if an option year will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all option years.

II. Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA’s level of involvement in this program is listed under Section I above.

Fiscal Year Funds: 2015 – base year, \$200,000; 2016 – option year-one, \$200,000; 2017 – option year-two, \$200,000; pending successful performance and availability of funds.

Approximate Total Funding: \$600,000

Floor of Award Range: none

Ceiling of Award Range: \$200,000

Approximate Average Award: \$200,000

Approximate Number of Awards: one

Anticipated Award Date: April 1, 2015

Anticipated Project Completion Date: September 1, 2018. This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award – one base year plus two option years.

Additional Information: Cooperative agreement(s) will be awarded for a period of 18 months (base year) with the option for two additional 12 month periods (option year one and two). ECA will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise an option year at least 90 days in advance of expiration of the current year after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to exercise option years will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

III. Eligibility Information:

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

III.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with OMB Circular A-110, (Revised), Subpart C.23 - Cost Sharing and Matching. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution will be reduced in like proportion.

III.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

- a) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award in an amounts exceeding \$130,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition. The Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.
- b) Technical Eligibility: All proposals must comply with the requirements listed below or they 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.
- d) 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 PSI.

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

IV.1. Contact Information to Request an Application Package: Please contact the Youth Programs Division, ECA/PE/C/PY/T, SA-5, 3rd Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, tel. 202-632-9352, PhillipsJA@state.gov, to request a Solicitation Package. The Solicitation Package contains the PSI which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. It also contains the POGI, which provides specific information, award criteria and budget instructions tailored to this competition.

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

IV.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet: The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>. Please read all information before downloading.

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

IV.3a. You are required to have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) 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 DUNS number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a DUNS number, access <http://www.dunandbradstreet.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your DUNS number is included in the appropriate box of the SF-424 which is part of the formal application package.

IV.3b. All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget. Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory PSI and the POGI for additional formatting and technical requirements.

IV.3c. All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the System for Award Management (SAM) database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding. You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. Please note: Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of

amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 1) Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one-page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

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

IV.3d. All ECA awards recipient organizations must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing www.GrantSolutions.gov. To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click "Getting Started-Request a User Account" at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access. Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday and can be reached at help@grantsolutions.gov or 1-866-577-0771.

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

IV.3d.1. Adherence To All Regulations Governing The J Visa

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

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the secure and proper administration of Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by

recipient organizations and program participants to all regulations governing the J visa program status. Therefore, proposals should explicitly state in writing that the applicant is prepared to assist the Bureau in meeting all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62. If your organization has experience as a designated Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor, the applicant should discuss their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et. seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

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

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

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

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

IV.3d.2. 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.

IV.3d.3. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

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

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 RFGP (listed here in increasing order of importance):

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

IV.3d.4. 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.

IV.3e. Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

IV.3e.1. 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.

IV.3e.2. 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.

For competitions that will be renewed through the option year, applicants must submit:

- the SF-424A which must include the budget request amount for the base-year of the program;
- a detailed proposal narrative and budget for the base year of funding (Please refer to the PSI for general budget guidance.). The narrative should also include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus one additional option year, pending successful program performance and availability of funds; and
- an abbreviated/estimated summary budget presenting the total projected administrative and program costs for the anticipated total duration of programming (base year, plus one option year).

To exercise the option year mechanism the recipient will be required to submit:

- timely quarterly performance and financial reports;
- a request in writing to ECA at least 90 days in advance of the expiration of the current program year.
- a summary budget that projects program expenses through the end of the current year;
- a detailed budget outlining both administrative and program expenses for the requested option year; and
- a brief narrative to support the continuation of the award.

The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will:

1. closely monitor the recipient's performance through site visits, desk audits, mandatory quarterly performance and financial reports, consultations, and other forms of communication and dialogue before exercising additional option years. (Additional details regarding monitoring and oversight of the program by ECA representatives will be provided at the time the base-year award is made.)
2. review and evaluate all mandatory quarterly program and financial reports;
 - a. All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up-to-date before the Bureau will exercise additional option years.
 - b. Any/all concerns, issues, or modifications requested by the Grants Officer or Program Officer to the original program design or method of implementation must be responded to in writing.
 - c. The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will review and advise of ECA's approval or disapproval of the response before issuing subsequent option years.

IV.3e.3. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

- Staff travel
- Participant travel (international, domestic, ground transportation, passport and visa fees)
- Orientations
- Cultural and social activities
- Meeting costs
- Lodging, when not in home stay
- Living allowance for host families
- Food (primarily group meals)
- Interpreters, if necessary
- Reasonable accommodations for participants with disabilities
- Follow-on activities
- Evaluation
- Pocket money for participants' incidental expenses
- Other justifiable expenses directly related to supporting program activities

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

IV.3f. Application Deadline and Methods of Submission:

Application Deadline Date: January 16, 2015

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

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov

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

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

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

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

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission to:
Grants.gov Customer Support
Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays
Email: support@grants.gov

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

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

submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

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

IV.3g. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

V. Application Review Information:

V.1. REVIEW PROCESS:

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. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards cooperative agreements resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

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

- 1. Quality of the program idea:** The proposed program should be well developed, respond to design outlined in the solicitation, and demonstrate originality. It should be clearly and accurately written, substantive, and with sufficient detail. Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission.
- 2. Program planning:** A detailed agenda and work plan should clearly demonstrate how project objectives would be achieved. The agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above and in the POGI. The substance of workshops, seminars, presentations, school-based activities, and/or site visits should be described in detail. Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. The proposal should clearly demonstrate how the organization will meet the program's objectives and plan.
- 3. Support of diversity:** The proposal should demonstrate the recipient's commitment to promoting the awareness and understanding of diversity in program content. Applicants should demonstrate readiness to accommodate participants with physical disabilities.
- 4. Institutional capacity and track record:** Applicant organizations should demonstrate their capacity for conducting international youth exchanges, focusing on three areas of competency: (1) provision of projects that address the goals, objectives, and themes outlined in this document; (2) age-appropriate programming for youth; and (3) previous experience working on programs in Mexico. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program goals. The proposal should demonstrate an institutional record, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past

Bureau grants as determined by the Bureau's Office of Contracts. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

5. Program evaluation: The proposal should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The proposal should include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The award recipient will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded.

6. Cost-effectiveness and cost sharing: The applicant should demonstrate efficient use of Bureau funds. 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, which demonstrates institutional and community commitment.

VI. Award Administration Information:

VI.1. Award Notices:

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

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

VI.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following: Office of Management and Budget Circular A 122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations."

Office of Management and Budget Circular A-21, "Cost Principles for Educational Institutions."

OMB Circular A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Governments".

OMB Circular No. A 110 (Revised), Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Nonprofit Organizations.
OMB Circular No. A-102, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants-in-Aid to State and Local Governments.

OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Government, and Non-profit Organizations
Please reference the following websites for additional information:

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

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

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

Mandatory:

1. Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. . . Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. . . (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). . . The first page of the Performance Progress Report form (SF-PPR) must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here: http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68. . . The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). . . The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. . . Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to GrantSolutions.gov, in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.
2. A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all program performance reports.
3. A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award.
4. A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.
5. Because this competition allows for the exercise of Option Years, applicants must be placed on a mandatory quarterly program and financial reporting cycle. The due dates for these reports will be included in the final assistance award document. The program and financial reports must demonstrate substantial progress by addressing progress towards the original approved goals and objectives, relative activities and events, and supporting fiscal data. The reports will be reviewed by both the assigned Grant Officer and Program Officer. Quarterly program and financial report guidelines will be sent once an award is made

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

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

VII. Agency Contacts:

For questions about this announcement, contact: Jennifer Phillips, U.S. Department of State, Youth Programs Division, ECA/PE/C/PY/T, SA-5, 3rd Floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, tel. 202-632-9352, PhillipsJA@state.gov.

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this RFGP should reference the above 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 RFGP deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

VIII. Other Information:**Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this RFGP 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 RFGP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section VI.3 above.

Evan Ryan
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

December 09, 2014