

**Department of State**

**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Request  
for Grant Proposals: FY 2014 Entrepreneurship Development  
for Women Leaders in the Middle East and North Africa**

**Announcement Type: Cooperative Agreement**

**Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAPE-14-005**

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

**Application Deadline: May 30, 2014**

**Executive Summary:** This exchange program will bring 25-30 emerging women leaders from the entrepreneurship field including the business, academia, media, and private and nonprofit sectors throughout the Middle East and North Africa to the United States for approximately two weeks of leadership training, mentoring and networking. The program will include a Washington, D.C.-based program, a week-long training institute at an educational institution in Boston, MA, and a mentoring component in New York City. After the U.S.-based activities, ECA anticipates that a private sector partner will organize a Middle East-based summit for program participants and others. The cooperative agreement will not exceed \$350,000 in total funding. This is currently envisioned as a pilot program. Pending successful implementation of the program, the establishment

of a successful partnership with participating organizations and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, the Bureau reserves the right to renew this award for two additional fiscal years before openly competing it again.

**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.

**GENERAL PROGRAM OUTLINES**

The **Entrepreneurship Development for Women Leaders in the Middle East and North Africa** is a collaborative partnership program that will be organized and funded by the U.S. Department of State and a private sector partner. The program will cultivate the leadership potential of women in the Middle East and North Africa to promote women's economic empowerment.

The exchange program will bring 25-30 emerging women leaders (generally mid-career professionals) to the United States for approximately two weeks of leadership training, mentoring and networking. The program may include participants from the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. However, ECA reserves the right to modify or expand this list of participating countries based upon Department priorities.

The program will target emerging women leaders from the entrepreneurship field including the business, academia, media, and private and nonprofit sectors. The recruitment and selection process will be carried out by ECA. Participants will be nominated by the Public Affairs

Sections at the partnering U.S. Embassies mentioned above. All participants will have working English language skills.

During the application process, candidates will describe a community-based project they wish to implement that will help their communities advance women's economic empowerment locally as well as nationally. It is envisioned that during the program, these projects will be refined with a final plan completed by the end of the U.S. programming. Competitive proposals submitted by organizations applying for this cooperative agreement will include a plan to develop these projects and mechanisms to link into and leverage on-going regional initiatives led by other U.S. government agencies, development banks, donor groups, civil society organizations, or international organizations. An example includes but is not limited to the OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum, an inter-regional network of government, private sector and civil society representatives that promotes efforts to accelerate women's enterprise development in the Middle East and North Africa. Proposals should also include a plan to track and assist with the implementation of these projects when the foreign participants return home.

Participants will begin the exchange program in Washington, D.C. with an orientation program, a visit to the Department of State and other off site visits in March 2015. The program will be organized and coordinated by the award recipient and the Department of State.

Following their visit to Washington, participants will travel to Boston for a week-long, customized leadership training program at an educational institution. The training will focus on practical strategies for leading change and may include modules on negotiation, communication skills, decision making, personal leadership style, and team building. Interactive exercises, peer to peer support, and case studies will be used to ensure the training is relevant and practical.

The final days of the exchange program will take place in New York City where participants will be mentored by teams of senior women leaders identified by the Department of State's private sector partner. Team mentoring will give participants access to diverse skill sets and expertise. In consultation with the private sector partner, the award recipient should develop a Monitoring Toolkit to guide the mentoring teams in creating a rich program of activities

and meetings for their mentees. During their visit to New York, the participants will go on site visits to such places as the New York Stock Exchange, the Council on Foreign Relations, Chambers of Commerce, the United Nations, and a media outlet, among others.

Finally, a summit in the Middle East and North Africa region will be sponsored by the private sector partner for the participants in 2015. The summit will aim to promote women's economic empowerment and will convene regional and international stakeholders. The summit will highlight the work of the women who participated in the exchange program.

Award applicants must demonstrate competency to manage all financial aspects of the program, including participant costs and transparent arrangements of sub-grant relationships with partner organizations, if applicable.

**Responsibilities of the Award Recipient Organization:**

- Coordinate with the U.S. Department of State and its private sector partners on all program components.

- Purchase all international and domestic travel tickets, and coordinate all travel logistics.
- Design and implement the Washington, D.C. component, and in cooperation with the project partners, coordinate and implement the Boston and New York City components (including logistical arrangements for lodging, meals and transportation).
- Develop a Mentoring Toolkit and implement training for participants in mentoring.
- Develop briefing materials for participants, mentors and guest speakers.
- Organize field visits for participants in Washington, D.C. and provide any logistical assistance necessary for field visits in Boston and New York.
- Carry out all monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. The Bureau places high importance on monitoring and evaluation as a means of ensuring and measuring a project's success. Proposals must include a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan that assesses the impact of the project. Please refer to section IV.3d.3. Project Monitoring and Evaluation below.
- Assist the participants in developing a community-based project to advance women's economic empowerment,

which should include mechanisms to link into and leverage on-going regional initiatives, listed above. Track and help with their implementation when the foreign participants return home.

- The above activities will be funded through the Bureau cooperative agreement.

**Responsibilities of the U.S. Department of State:**

- The nomination and selection of all foreign program participants.
- Direct involvement in the design and coordination of Washington, D.C.-based programming.
- Issuing the DS-2019 forms required for J visas; see Section IV.3d.1 for additional information related to the administration of J visa programs.
- ECA will support the international airfare for the U.S. exchange and per diem, lodging and domestic transportation through the cooperative agreement.

**Responsibilities of Private Sector Partner:**

- Participate in the selection of program participants.

- Organize a multi-day mentoring program in New York City.
- Organize and sponsor a program closing event in New York City.
- Identify women leaders and Middle East and North Africa experts to serve as guest speakers throughout the program in Washington, D.C., Boston and New York City.
- Organize and sponsor a summit on women's economic empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa, which should link and leverage on-going regional efforts.
- Cover all the costs associated with the regional summit, including venue rental and associated costs, catering, speaker travel and accommodations, travel and accommodations for participants, and summit materials.

**Responsibilities of Educational Institution:**

- Develop and sponsor a customized week-long leadership training program in Boston, MA for foreign participants.
- The private sector partner will cover the costs associated with the preparation and delivery of the

week-long leadership training program, including faculty fees, guest speakers, venue, meals management, overhead and materials.

**PROJECTED TIMELINE OF PROGRAMMING:**

**Candidate Recruitment and Selection: September-December 2014**

**U.S. - Based Programming**

- Washington, DC: March 2015 (TBC)
- Boston: March 2015 (TBC)
- New York City: March 2015 (TBC)

**Overseas Programming**

- Entrepreneurship Development for Women Leaders Program in the Middle East/North Africa Summit: 2015

**II. Award Information:**

**Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement**

**Fiscal Year Funds: 2014**

**Approximate Total Funding: \$350,000**

**Approximate Number of Awards: 1**

**Approximate Average Award: \$350,000**

**Anticipated Award Date: August 1, 2014**

**Anticipated Project Completion Date: July 30, 2015**

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.

**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 amount up to \$350,000 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.

**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 Office of Professional and Cultural Exchanges, ECA/PE, SA-5, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, 202-632-6446, [minercx@state.gov](mailto:minercx@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 Chris Miner 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 Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document 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](http://www.SAM.gov) until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. 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](http://www.GrantSolutions.gov). To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click "Getting Started-Request a User Account" at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM - 6 PM EST, Monday - Friday and can be reached at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov) or 1-866-577-0771.

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

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 (either a grant or cooperative agreement) 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://jlvisa.state.gov> or from:

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

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):

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**, 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.

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. 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

IV.3e.2. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

- 1) **Travel.** International and domestic airfare; airline baggage and seat fees; visas; transit costs; ground

transportation costs. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act. There is no charge for J-1 visas for participants in Bureau sponsored projects.

- 2) **Per Diem.** For U.S.-based programming, organizations should use the published Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>.

ECA requests applicants to budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed Federal per diem rates. Foreign per diem rates can be accessed at:

[http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content\\_id=184&menu\\_id=78](http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78)

- 3) **Book and Cultural Allowances.** Foreign participants are entitled to a one-time cultural allowance of \$150 per person, plus a book allowance of \$50. U.S. project staff, trainers or participants are not eligible to receive these benefits.

- 4) **Consultants.** Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations.

Honoraria rates should not exceed \$250 per day.

Organizations are encouraged to cost-share rates that would exceed that figure. Sub-recipient organizations may also be employed, in which case the written agreement between the prospective award recipient and sub-recipient should be included in the proposal. Such sub-recipients should detail the division of responsibilities and proposed costs, and sub-recipient awards should be itemized in the budget.

- 5) **Room Rental.** The rental of meeting space should not exceed \$250 per day. Any rates that exceed this amount should be cost shared.
  
- 6) **Materials.** Grantee organizations should expect to submit a copy of all project materials to ECA, and ECA support should be acknowledged on all materials developed with its funding.
  
- 7) **Supplies.** Applicants may propose to use grant funds to purchase supplies, such as computers and printers; supply costs should be justified in the budget narrative. Costs for furniture are not allowed.

- 8) **Working Meal.** One working meal may be provided during the U.S.-based program. Per capita costs may not exceed \$45/person, excluding room rental. The number of invited guests may not exceed participants by more than a factor of two-to-one.
- 9) **Return Travel Allowance.** A return travel allowance of \$70 for each foreign participant may be included in the budget. This allowance would cover incidental expenses incurred during international travel.
- 10) **Health and Travel Insurance.** The award recipient will be responsible for enrolling foreign and U.S. participants in the ECA-sponsored Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). The premium is paid by ECA and should not be included in the grant proposal budget. Applicants may include costs for travel insurance for U.S. and foreign participants in the budget.
- 11) **Wire Transfer Fees.** When necessary, applicants may include costs to transfer funds to partner organizations overseas. Award recipients are urged to

research applicable taxes that may be imposed on these transfers by host governments.

12) **In-Country Travel Costs for Visa Processing**

**Purposes.** Visas for foreign participants are provided by DOS and should not be included in the budget. Given the requirements associated with obtaining J-1 visas for ECA-supported participants, applicants should include costs for any travel associated with procuring visas, including travel for interviews, delivering or picking-up passports, etc.

13) **Administrative Costs.** Costs necessary for the effective administration of the project may include salaries for grantee organization employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the PSI. While there is no rigid ratio of administrative to program costs, proposals in which the administrative costs do not exceed 25% of the total requested ECA grant funds will be more competitive under the cost effectiveness and cost sharing criterion, per item V.1 below. Proposals should show strong administrative cost sharing

contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner and other sources.

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

Application Deadline Date: May 30, 2014

Method of Submission:

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

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

Please follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/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](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site.

There are no exceptions to the above deadline.

Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

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

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

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 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. Program planning and ability to achieve objectives:**

Proposals should exhibit direct linkage to the goals of the Bureau's mission as well as to relevant women's or business networks in the region. They should also demonstrate experience working with entrepreneurs as well as the public and the private sector in the region. Proposals should demonstrate a realistic and achievable scope that fits within the budgetary and time parameters set forth in the RFGP. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how project objectives and key project elements, especially the development of individual projects by the foreign

participants, will be achieved through programmatic activities.

**2. Institutional capacity and track record:** Proposals should include (1) the institution's mission and date of establishment; (2) a summary outline of prior awards--U.S. government and/or private support received for programs of a similar nature, including, preferably, the ability to conduct programs of a similar nature in the Middle East and North Africa; and (3) descriptions of and resumes of key staff who will implement the program. The proposal should reflect the institution's expertise in the subject area and an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau grants as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. ECA strongly encourages applicants to submit letters of support from relevant partners who would be involved in the program.

**3. Program monitoring and evaluation:** Proposals should include a detailed plan to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and overall impact of programs. Program

goals should target clearly defined results in objective quantitative terms. Proposals should include draft evaluation instruments such as surveys and questionnaires.

**4. 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.

**5. Follow-on activities:** Proposals should demonstrate how the organization will connect participants with regional initiatives and leaders after the program activities are over and how they will advise participants of program and network development/continuation once they have returned to the region.

**6. Support of diversity:** Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity and describe how that policy will be integrated into all

aspects of the program including but not limited to selection of participants, fellowship placements, program materials, training methodology, etc. Applicants should demonstrate readiness to accommodate participants with physical disabilities. Applicants should refer to guidance in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for the Bureau's "Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines."

#### **VI.) Award Administration Information**

##### **VI.1a. 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 an 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 mailed 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.1b The following additional requirements apply to this project:

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

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

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact Chris Miner (202-632-6446 and [minercx@state.gov](mailto:minercx@state.gov)) for additional information.

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>.

<http://fa.statebuy.state.gov>

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](http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68). The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance,

please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov). The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. 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](mailto:FFATAECA@state.gov). This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to 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: Chris Miner, U.S. Department of State, Office of Professional and Cultural Exchanges, ECA/PE, SA-5, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, 202-632-6446 (telephone), [minercx@state.gov](mailto:minercx@state.gov).

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this RFGP 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 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

April 17, 2014

Assistant Secretary

for Educational and Cultural Affairs

U.S. Department of State