

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY 2021 TechWomen Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0007428

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.415

Key Date/Application Deadline: January 21, 2021

Executive Summary: The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Professional Fellows Division, of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA or “the Bureau”) invites proposal submissions for the FY 2021 TechWomen program to empower, connect, and support the next generation of women leaders in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The exchange program uses a mentorship model to support emerging STEM leaders from Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa. Organizations applying for this federal award should demonstrate the capacity to recruit, select, and place in mentorship experiences a total of approximately 100-110 women from select countries in these regions to participate in a five- to six-week intensive peer-mentoring program in the United States. The mentoring experience should focus on advancing the status of professional women in the STEM fields through project-based peer mentorships, skill building, networking opportunities, and enhancement activities. Funding will also support follow-on activities in the participants’ home countries that inspire and encourage girls and university-age women interested or working in STEM-based careers, engage young women using technology in their professions, and support former participants of the program (“alumnae”). Special emphasis should be placed on finding creative ways to involve alumnae in strengthening a network of female STEM professionals, building professional standards and capacity, and inspiring the next generation of girls interested in STEM careers by exposing them to female role models. Award applicants must exhibit their ability to manage all program logistics and overseas follow-on programming.

Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

It is the Bureau’s intent to award a cooperative agreement of one base year plus two non-competitive continuations. Please see section B.) Federal Award Information, below for additional details.

A. Program Description:

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the

Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

Purpose: Since 2011, TechWomen has supported women engaged in the STEM fields from specific countries by providing a highly-tailored mentorship experience in the United States with American women representing leading science and technology companies and institutions. Pending the availability of FY 2021 funding, TechWomen will link approximately 100-110 female emerging leaders (“participants”) who have at least two years of professional experience in the STEM fields with female peer mentors in the United States for a five- to six-week mentorship program to support the emerging leaders’ development in the STEM fields and enable them to reach their full potential in the science and technology industry. For purposes of this NOFO, the term “participants” refers to the international female emerging leaders and “mentors” refers to the American women who mentor these female participants during the program. Participants work with their American mentors on specific projects based on their professional interests and experience at technology and innovation companies, an experience enhanced by several workshops designed to build their understanding of technology’s integral relationship with the professional world. Approximately four to six months after the U.S.-based mentorships conclude, several of the American mentors will travel to select participating countries for one week to lead seminars, trainings, and networking activities for women in the STEM fields, as well as workshops for young girls that will focus on careers in science and technology.

The goals of the program are to:

- Empower emerging women leaders (“participants”) to advocate for their rights and reach their full potential in the science and technology industries;
- Create and maintain a sustainable professional network of support for women in the STEM fields in the United States and participating countries;
- Develop the field of technology, explore the role of the tech industry in economic stability, increase the trade capacity of the participating countries, and promote economic advancement;
- Build an understanding of technology’s integral relationship with the professional world and increase participants’ understanding of how Americans drive development in science and technology;

- Enhance U.S. science and technology companies' understanding of challenges in other countries, providing them opportunities to hear first-hand from the international participants about the STEM and market climates overseas;
- Provide women in the STEM fields with tools not only to advance their careers and encourage innovation, but also to become role models for women and girls in their communities;
- Expand girls' interest in STEM careers by exposing them to female role models; and
- Increase mutual understanding between key networks of professionals in different parts of the world.

A.a Eligible Countries and Participants: The below countries/territories are expected to participate in the FY 2021 TechWomen program. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program's needs and availability of funds. In addition, the Bureau reserves the right to adjust and/or add additional countries and/or regions should conditions change in a partner country and/or if other countries and/or regions are identified as viable alternatives and/or Department priorities.

Sub-Saharan Africa (AF): Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Zimbabwe

South and Central Asia (SCA): Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

Middle East and North Africa (NEA): Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, and Tunisia

Participants will be women (ages approximately 23-45) from the above countries/territories who are engaged in professional careers that require significant STEM expertise/knowledge and/or innovative application of these skills, and who already are, or show promise of being, role models for others in their countries, particularly for women. "STEM" should be interpreted broadly to include – but not be limited to – the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, education, and business with STEM components. Participants must have at least two years of work experience in a field that explicitly and directly involves and applies science, technology, engineering, or mathematics in meeting professional goals. All participants must be proficient in written and spoken English.

A.b. Mentorships: Each participant will be matched with one female U.S. mentor who is a mid-level professional at a host company. Each participant will also have support of a female American(s) separate from the professional mentor to help ease the participant's

adjustment to, and familiarize her with, American society. See “A.2. Award Recipient Responsibilities” below for more detailed information on mentorships.

A.c Alumni Engagement and Overseas Follow-On Programming: Building and maintaining connections among Emerging Leaders across world regions before, during, and after the program is a critical part of the program’s success. Equally important is building and maintaining connections of alumni across all cohort years who are from the same country. Proposals should include plans to create and maintain an engaged network of alumni. The network should advance alumni’s professional development goals and interests and the Department of State’s public diplomacy objectives.

Applicants should also incorporate ECA alumni initiatives into their plans and communications for alumni programming, including, but not limited to, the online community on the International Exchange Alumni website (alumni.state.gov) and other exchange alumni opportunities offered by the U.S. Department of State such as small grants and professional development seminars. It is important that all alumni programs continue to strengthen a sense of identity with the U.S. government, as such, the applicants should follow ECA communications guidance for crediting the U.S. Department of State.

An important component of TechWomen is the execution of at least two follow-on overseas projects per year to continue to provide professional support to alumnae of the program, share new STEM experiences, and conduct STEM outreach to a larger population of women and girls. Select American mentors will travel to at least two of the foreign participants’ home countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, and/or the Middle East and North Africa several months after the conclusion of the U.S.-based program to engage with TechWomen alumnae; offer skills development sessions and workshops for a broader range of local participants, including young girls and undergraduate women; and promote the TechWomen program to future participants. The selected countries, approved by ECA in consultation with regional bureaus and posts, should be in at least two different geographic regions, rotating in subsequent years during the exercise of two non-competitive continuations, so that each of the three regions will be visited at least once in a three-year period. The program model should support the development of an international professional network for women working in the STEM fields both within and outside of the participants’ home countries; provide continued resources and mentoring to TechWomen alumnae; and create concrete sustainable action plans to ensure a broad multiplier effect. To this end, TechWomen participants will develop action plans while in the United States to take on projects that benefit others in their communities after they return home. Additional information on overseas follow-on projects and engagement is provided in section “A.2. Award Recipient Responsibilities” below.

A.d. Partner Organizations: Award applicants must identify the U.S. and foreign organizations and individuals with whom they are proposing to collaborate to recruit and select participants overseas through an open, merit-based competition, to secure mentorships in the United States at leading science and technology firms, and to implement follow-on projects/workshops conducted by American mentors in certain of the participants' home countries. Proposals should contain letters of commitment or support from any partner organizations with which the applicant plans to work to secure the mentorships, and for the follow-on projects/workshops overseas. A description of any previous cooperative activities with these partner organizations should be included in the proposal, along with information about their mission, activities, and accomplishments. Applicants should clearly outline and describe the roles and responsibilities of all partner organizations in terms of project logistics, management, and oversight. Proposals should also include letters of intent and/or commitment from U.S.-based science, technology, and innovation companies or organizations that would be willing to host a TechWomen participant from Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, and/or the Middle East and North Africa. Since diversity is an important pillar of the work in ECA, organizations

A.e. Projected Timeline:

ECA envisions the approximate dates of TechWomen for the FY 2021 base year to be as follows:

- *August 2021 – October 2021:* Planning meetings with ECA and finalization of program plans
- *November 2021 – May 2022:* Recruitment, selection, and notification of foreign participants. Recruitment campaign for U.S. hosting companies/institutions
- *March 2022 – June 2022:* Securing U.S.-based mentors and host sites
- *July 2022 – September 2022:* Visa issuance for selected participants and pre-departure preparations
- *September 2022 – November 2022:* Travel to the United States by foreign participants for orientation, placement at mentorship site are strongly encouraged to propose organizations that take all aspects of diversity into account.
- s, and a debriefing in Washington, D.C. (that includes a reception at the Department of State)

- *January 2023 – May 2023*: U.S. mentors travel to select countries overseas to conduct seminars, workshops, and/or other activities with TechWomen alumnae. Final evaluations of the program conducted

A.f. Competitive proposals for TechWomen will include the following:

- A robust recruitment and merit-based selection process for approximately 100-110 participants from Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe. Every effort should be made to recruit individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences including women from marginalized or underserved populations or individuals with disabilities;
- A clearly articulated overview of all U.S.-based activities, including but not limited to outreach to American companies/institutions to secure host sites and/or other support (assistance with workshops, venues, etc.); outreach to American women in STEM-related fields willing to serve as mentors; monitoring and support of participants during the mentorship; pre-departure information, arrival orientation; and a closing forum that allows for a debriefing/evaluation session for all the participants at the conclusion of the program in Washington, D.C.;
- A strategy to ensure the description of the participants' follow-on action plans are integrated into the broader program, are concrete and measurable, and benefit participants' communities;
- A description of the two follow-on overseas projects (including workshops, seminars and/or other activities) conducted by the American mentors who will travel overseas several months after the U.S.-based mentorships have concluded;
- A staffing plan that details how staff will fulfill all responsibilities, outline appropriate staffing levels and structure to effectively implement all proposed activities and initiatives. Resumes of experienced staff proposed to work on execution of the TechWomen program;
- A comprehensive plan to evaluate how the program's outcomes will achieve the specific objectives described in the narrative, to include a data collection strategy to demonstrate the program's effectiveness both in the United States and all participating regions overseas;
- A proposed timeline detailing TechWomen activities and how they support the program's goals;
- Letters of commitment from U.S. companies or organizations to serve as possible host mentoring sites;
- Letters of commitment from any proposed partner organizations/subrecipients that will assist the applicant in implementing TechWomen. Award applicants should

clearly outline and describe the roles and responsibilities of all proposed partner organizations/subrecipients in terms of project logistics, management, and oversight;

- A post-award plan that demonstrates how both the mentors and participants can maintain contacts initiated during the program, as well as with past participants;
- A plan to facilitate interaction between TechWomen alumnae and girls/women at entry level positions in their careers in the alumnae's home countries – including alumnae of the Bureau's TechGirls exchange program (exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/techgirls) to foster networking and mentorships; and
- A budget reflecting a cooperative agreement request not to exceed \$3,080,000 for the FY 2021 TechWomen program with the designated countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa.

A1. Substantial Involvement:

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. ECA anticipates working closely with the recipient organization to ensure that all aspects of the program model support the TechWomen program goals. ECA activities and responsibilities for this program include participation in the design and direction of program implementation including recruitment and selection strategies, development of publicity and program materials, creation of online components, and execution of U.S.-based and follow-on programming.

ECA's specific responsibilities for this program include:

- Participating and providing guidance in the design and execution of all program activities;
- Collaborating with the award recipient on the outreach and selection of mentors and host sites;
- Approval of host companies and institutions/organizations;
- Final selection of participants;
- Review and approval of all program publicity and other materials;
- Approval of program timelines and agendas;
- Assisting with Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)-related issues;
- Approval of staffing plan and key personnel and any changes that are made;
- Assisting with participant emergencies;
- Liaising with relevant U.S. embassies and country desk officers at the U.S. Department of State, particularly in terms of recruitment and selection efforts;
- Assisting in arrangements for the debriefing session in Washington, D.C., and the reception at the U.S. Department of State;

- Working with the award recipient to publicize the program through various media outlets and social media platforms of ECA and Public Affairs Sections (PASs) at U.S. embassies/consulates overseas;
- Monitoring and evaluating the program, as necessary, through site visits or debriefing sessions; and
- Conducting an annual performance evaluation/review.

U.S. Embassy/Consulate Involvement:

In consultation with ECA, the award recipient must actively engage the relevant U.S. embassies/consulates in the final selection of all TechWomen participants. Additionally, U.S. embassies/consulates will be involved in the approval of the locations for and plans for the two follow-on overseas projects per year. See section A.c. for more details on these follow-on activities.

A2. Award Recipient Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

- Develop and conduct a comprehensive recruitment and selection process that includes a clearly articulated plan to ensure a diverse group of participants, including those with disabilities;
- Identify U.S.-based companies and individuals with whom collaboration on mentorships and networking opportunities is possible; demonstrate robust engagement with the private sector to expand networking opportunities and secure mentorship hosts in small-, medium-, and large-sized companies;
- Create program guidelines and other relevant materials for U.S. host organizations;
- Arrange appropriate and meaningful project-based mentorships of five to six weeks in duration for all the participants at U.S.-based science and technology companies or institutions;
 - The program should include a peer mentor at the work place and separate support for cultural/social activities outside the office, with additional educational and cultural programming, as appropriate;
 - According to their expertise and interests, participants should be placed individually or in small groups in companies located within tech hub areas of the United States that will afford them a support network;
 - Based on each participant's interests and goals, the award recipient will ensure that the mentorship is designed around a specific project or effort in a host company or institution that is clearly relevant to the participant's professional goals;

- Issue participant DS-2019 forms and ship to the applicable embassies or consulates for all international participants and alternates. All international participants will travel on either the U.S. government designation or International Visitor for the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor program;
- Enroll participants in the Bureau's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) for the duration of the program, issue health benefits identifications cards, and assist with claims as necessary. More information on ASPE is available at www.usdos.sevencorners.com;
- Provide pre-departure orientation materials to the applicable U.S. embassies/consulates to conduct the orientations for finalists before departing their home countries;
- Arrange all appropriate program-related travel to/from and within the United States for TechWomen participants, including but not limited to transportation, lodging, and meals and incidental expenses;
- Conduct a group arrival orientation at the beginning of the program in the United States;
- Monitor participants – including their safety and well-being – and monitor the performance of host companies/institutions for the duration of the U.S. program;
- Create a comprehensive one- to three-day closing program in Washington, D.C. that exposes the participants and a representative number of American mentors to the work of the U.S. Department of State, showcases the mentoring relationships forged during the exchange, and affords participants the opportunity to network with U.S. government officials and those working on STEM-related issues in the U.S. capital. The award recipient responsibilities include handling all logistical arrangements for a reception at the U.S. Department of State. The award recipient will be responsible for the costs of the reception and for all travel by the 100-110 participants to Washington, D.C. for the debriefing, as well as all lodging (maximum 4 nights) and transportation for the participants in Washington, D.C.;
- Conduct a debriefing/evaluation session at the conclusion of the U.S.-based mentorship/program;
- Promote mutual understanding and partnerships between key professional groups in the United States and counterpart groups in eligible countries;
- Create sustainable professional mentoring relationships between U.S. and foreign participants, as well as with past TechWomen participants;
- Develop at least two follow-on overseas projects (approximately one week each) after the conclusion of the U.S.-based program in at least two of the participants' home countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, and/or the Middle East and North Africa (the selected countries should be in at least two different geographic regions) for U.S. mentors to reunite with alumnae of the program and to conduct/participate in seminars, workshops, on-site consultancies, and other types of activities with the goal of reinforcing the mentorship experience and creating a wider network of women who are established in, or aspire to, these

professions. The award recipient will be responsible for all logistical arrangements to carry out these follow-on projects overseas. During the projects, the award recipient should arrange at least two-three workshops and/or interactive presentations for at least 25 local girls (within the age range of 12-18) in each country visited to expose them to role models and insight into what it means to be a female leader in the STEM fields. In countries where there are alumnae of the Bureau's TechGirls program (currently NEA and SCA), the award recipient should make every effort to include TechGirls alumnae in these workshops. At the end of each overseas project, there should be a debriefing and evaluation session with the participants. The award recipient will be responsible for providing guidance on international flights, lodging, and visas for U.S. mentors traveling overseas for the follow-on projects. However, the U.S. mentors and their companies/institutions will be responsible for funding the international flights, lodging, and any needed visas. The award recipient will arrange and pay for all local transportation in the destination country (e.g., buses or vans needed to get to and from events in the capital city).

- Develop a plan to connect and expand the network of STEM professionals in eligible countries;
- Engage TechWomen alumnae in each participating region. Proposals should include a plan to facilitate and support continued engagement/activities between TechWomen and TechGirls alumnae (for those countries where both programs are offered) aimed at building stronger connections, and promoting collaboration and mentoring opportunities between alumnae of these two ECA programs. The ECA Program Office and participating embassies will be able to assist in facilitating connections and contacts between the programs;
- Craft a comprehensive outreach strategy that fully utilizes online and social media platforms to highlight participant and alumnae achievements, collaborative projects, and new initiatives. This includes collecting, updating, and making available for consumption by the public and Department representatives narrative stories, anecdotes, and any quantifiable data that illustrate the impact and multiplier effect of TechWomen both overseas and in the United States;
- Handle the publication (both in print and online) of all program materials for TechWomen designed and arranged in collaboration with ECA and the respective U.S. embassies/consulates. Relevant materials include those to advertise and promote the program (both in the United States and overseas), orientation materials, mentoring guidelines, and materials for activities conducted in the participants' home countries. Materials and website designs must be approved by ECA prior to publication and/or distribution. See section "D.3k. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients" for additional information;
- Promote and support community development/impact projects following the participants' U.S. mentorships;

- Evaluate the program and its impact on the participants, host companies/organizations, and their communities;
- Manage financial aspects of the program including timely disbursement of participant stipends, housing allowances, etc. and promptly report any irregularities in the budget or spending to ECA;
- Participate in regular program reviews with ECA (in person or by telephone) to assess program implementation and identify matters of concern. The award recipient should report programmatic, financial and statistical information to ECA including brief monthly email updates outlining general programmatic activities conducted during the past month and anticipated programmatic activities to be conducted the following month;
- Provide a detailed staffing plan to include the names, titles, and portfolio breakdown of all staff who will work on TechWomen. Any changes to staffing plans and/or key personnel must be submitted to ECA for approval;
- Respond fully and promptly to requests for program information from ECA; and
- Ensure compliance with the terms of the Cooperative Agreement with ECA, including, but not limited to, submitting timely financial and program reports and proper budget oversight.

Proposal narratives should include a commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional non-competitive continuations, 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 non-competitive continuations are exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if a non-competitive continuation will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all non-competitive continuations.

B. Federal Award Information:

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

Fiscal Year Funds:

FY 2021- \$3,080,000 pending the availability of funds (base year);

FY 2022- \$3,080,000, pending successful performance and the availability of funds (non-competitive continuation year one);

FY 2023- \$3,080,000 pending successful performance and the availability of funds (non-competitive continuation year two),

Approximate Total Funding: \$9,240,000. This figure represents base year plus two Non-Competitive Continuation years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Approximate Average Award: \$3,080,000 pending the availability of funds.

Floor of Award Range: None

Ceiling of Award Range: \$3,080,000, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Award Date: August 31, 2021, pending the availability of FY 2021 base year funds.

Anticipated Project Completion Date: April 30, 2025. This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award – one base year plus two non-competitive continuation years.

Additional Information:

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

A Cooperative agreement will be awarded for a period of 20 months (base year) with Non-Competitive Continuations for two additional 20 month periods (non-competitive continuation years one and two). ECA will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise a Non-Competitive Continuation 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 a Non-Competitive Continuation will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

C.) Eligibility Information:

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

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

C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements:

a.) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one grant/cooperative agreement, in an amount up to

\$3,080,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

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

c.) **Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition.** If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. **Please note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

C.3. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution may be reduced in like proportion.

D.) Application and Submission Information:

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

D.1 Contact Information to Request an Application Package: Please contact the Office of Citizen Exchanges (ECA/PE/C) SA-5, 3rd Floor, U.S. Department of State,

2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 322-7764, WoodsAN@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 Angela Woods and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet: The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov>.

D.2a. Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.3p. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

D.3a. Unique Entity Identifier Number: You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (Data Universal Numbering System or DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package. For more detailed instructions for obtaining a UEI (DUNS) number, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

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

Proposal narratives should include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional non-competitive continuations, 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 non-competitive continuations are exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if a non-competitive continuation will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all non-competitive continuations.

In addition to information included in the PSI, proposals should include:

Program Narrative

Executive Summary (One page)

In one double-spaced page, provide the following information about the project:

1. Name of organization/participating institutions
2. Beginning and ending dates of the program
3. Nature of activity
5. Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources
6. Scope and Goals
 - a. Number and description of participants
 - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
 - c. Geographic diversity of program, both U.S. and overseas
 - d. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

Narrative

In twenty (20) double-spaced, single-sided pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below.

1. Vision (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits)
2. Participating Organizations
3. Program Activities
4. Program Evaluation
5. Follow-on
6. Project Management
7. Work Plan/Time Frame

Additional Information to be Submitted

- Detailed Budget (see section D.3o. Allowable Costs)
- 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.
- Calendar of activities/itinerary, if applicable
- Sample materials
- Letters of endorsement
- Resumes and CVs (resumes of all staff should be included in the submission; no resume should exceed two pages.)
- First Time Applicant Attachments, if applicable.

D.3c. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM): All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

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

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

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

D.3.d. Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System (FAPIIS):

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

D.3e. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Report: In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their award activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one-page description of program activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

D.3f. Required Registration with SAMS Domestic: All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic by accessing <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com> and clicking the "create an account" link. SAMS Domestic is the U.S. Department of State's grants management system and is supported by the Department's Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). Recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories that have previously used SAMS Domestic as a U.S. Department of State award recipient do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact the ILMS Help Desk for help in gaining access.

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

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

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

D.3g. Adherence To All Regulations Governing The J Visa: The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The award recipient will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

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

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

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.3h. Diversity, Freedom, and Democracy Guidelines: Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. 'Diversity' should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support of Diversity' section of this document as well as the DIVERSITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

D.3i. Program Monitoring and Evaluation: Please Note: The Bureau plans to add standardized indicators and corresponding data collection questions for performance monitoring during the period of performance of this award. Therefore, proposed performance monitoring plans and data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established. Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants

work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

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

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

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

Please note: Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be

measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

D.3j. Virtual Exchange Component: Award recipients should have the ability and capacity to transition to virtual implementation strategies that continue to advance foreign policy objectives and achieve lasting benefits for U.S. citizens and international participants. Proposals must include innovative options for virtual activities to augment, or substitute for, in-person engagement with all program stakeholders when changing political and/or environmental situations result in restrictions on international travel that require ECA to temporarily halt in-person exchange activities. Proposals must also address how the organization will conduct virtual exchanges for participants who have limited access to internet and/or limited access to a computer or mobile device.

Additionally, ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our International Exchange Alumni space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

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

D.3l. Budget Format: Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

D.3m. Key Personnel

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

D.3n. Non-Competitive Continuations: For competitions that will exercise a Non-Competitive Continuation 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 Proposal Submission Instruction Document (PSI) for general budget guidance.). The narrative should also include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional non-competitive continuation years, pending successful program performance and the 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 two non-competitive continuation years).

To exercise the Non-Competitive Continuation mechanism the recipient will be required to submit:

1. performance and financial reports on time;
2. a request in writing to ECA at least 30 days in receipt of the NCC invitation;
3. a summary budget that projects program expenses through the end of the current year;
4. a detailed budget outlining both administrative and program expenses for the requested non-competitive continuation year; and
5. 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 performance and financial reports, consultations, and other forms of communication and dialogue before exercising additional non-competitive continuations. (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;
 - All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up-to-date before the Bureau will exercise additional non-competitive continuations.
 - 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.
 - The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will review and advise of ECA's approval or disapproval of the response before issuing subsequent non-competitive continuations.
- 3.) Prior Grants Officer approval is required to utilize the remainder from an unobligated balance from a prior funding period to the subsequent funding period. If the Grants Officer determines that some or all of the unobligated funds are not necessary to perform the program activity, the Grants Officer may decline the Recipient's request to utilize the remainder from the unobligated balance.

The Grants Officer may, at their discretion, use the unobligated balance to reduce or offset future funding for a subsequent funding period. An unobligated balance at the end of a funding period is not sufficient justification to utilize the remainder of funds. A final determination and approval to utilize the remainder of any funds will be communicated via a cost amendment with adjustment, if any, to new obligation amounts.

- i. The request to utilize the remainder from an unobligated balance must include:
 - a. A brief narrative why funds remain unobligated and how the unobligated funds will be used to complete the previously approved goals and objectives of the program; and,
 - b. A detailed budget that reflects the amount of unobligated funds to date, and anticipated expenditures in the subsequent period of performance for all cost categories under the authorized budget.

D.30. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

- 1) International and domestic air fares; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs; airline baggage and seat fees; and in-country travel costs for visa processing purposes. Given the requirements associated with obtaining J-1 visas for ECA-supported participants, applicants should include costs for any travel associated with visa interviews or DS-2019 pick-up. 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 programs.
- 2) Per Diem. For U.S.-based programming, organizations should refer to 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 for overseas activities can be accessed at: https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78
- 3) Return Travel Allowance. A return travel allowance of approximately \$70 for each foreign participant may be included in the budget. The allowance may be used for incidental expenses incurred during international travel.
- 4) Cost of housing in the United States. The award recipient will be responsible for providing clean, safe and reasonably located housing for the TechWomen participants during their stay in the United States.
- 5) Orientation Costs. The award recipient will provide to posts overseas appropriate informational materials about TechWomen and the logistics involved in traveling to the United States. This information will be used by posts to conduct pre-departure orientations for the TechWomen participants in each country. The award recipient will itself conduct a comprehensive orientation for all the TechWomen participants upon their arrival in the United States.
- 6) Accident and Sickness Insurance. The TechWomen participants will be covered under the terms of a U.S. Department of State-sponsored health insurance policy. The premium is paid by the U.S. Department of State directly to the insurance company.
- 7) Consultants. Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Daily honoraria may not exceed \$250 per day. Subcontracting organizations may also be used, in which case the written agreement between the prospective award recipient and the subcontractor should be included in the proposal. Subcontracts should be itemized in the budget.
- 8) Room Rental. Room rental may not exceed \$250 per day per event or activity.
- 9) Materials Development. Your proposal may contain costs to purchase, develop and translate materials for participants and mentors.
- 10) 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.

11) Debriefing and Reception in Washington, D.C. After the conclusion of the U.S.-based mentorships, the TechWomen participants will take part in a one- to three-day debriefing and reception at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. The award recipient will be responsible for all costs involved in the debriefing, including the transportation for the participants to Washington, as well as their housing and meals while there. The award recipient will also be responsible for all expenditures incurred for the reception.

12) Awarding of small grants/seed funding for select TechWomen participants' action plans they put together while in the United States to take on projects that benefit others in their communities after they return home and other alumni activities.

13) Costs involved in TechWomen overseas follow-on programming (projects of approximately one week each) in at least two countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, and/or the Middle East and North Africa (the selected countries should be in at least two different geographic regions).

14) Website Expenses. Program branded website development, design, and maintenance costs.

15) Reasonable Accommodations. Organizations should budget for the reasonable accommodations of individuals with disabilities. Proposals should reflect plans to make necessary program modifications or participant numbers should these funds be used for reasonable accommodations.

16) Shipping costs for DS-2019 and other items.

17) Administrative Costs. Costs necessary for the effective administration of the program may include salaries for recipient organization employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the Application Package. While there is no rigid ratio of administrative to program costs, applicants are strongly encouraged to keep administrative costs as low as possible. Proposals should show strong administrative cost sharing contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner, and other sources. Please also include in the administrative portion of your budget plans for one or more staff of the recipient organization to travel to Washington, D.C. (if not already located in D.C.) to meet with your program officer within the first 45 days after the cooperative agreement has been awarded.

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

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

Application Deadline Date: Thursday, January 21, 2021

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

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

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

How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

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

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

How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov

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

Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues

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

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

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

Email: support@grants.gov

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA

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

- 1. Program planning and Ability to Achieve Program Objectives:** A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. The agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. The objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
- 2. Multiplier Effect/Impact:** Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.
- 3. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content, and implementation, including individual grantee/participant recruitment, selection, and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.
- 4. Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or

project's goals. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

Applicants who can demonstrate a strong private sector network to secure placements through their own resources will be deemed more competitive under this review criterion.

5. Follow-on Activities: Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) ensuring that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.

6. Project Evaluation: Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports.

7. Cost-effectiveness and Cost-sharing: The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Award Notices: Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer as identified in the application.

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

F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements: Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following: Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars).

For a copy of the OMB Guidance cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

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

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

F.3. Palestinian Authority, West Bank, and Gaza Programming: All awards made under this competition must be executed according to all relevant U.S. laws and policies regarding assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and to the West Bank and Gaza. Organizations must consult with relevant Public Affairs Offices before entering into any formal arrangements or agreements with Palestinian organizations or institutions.

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact Angela Woods, (202) 322-7764, WoodsAN@state.gov for additional information.

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

- 1.) Performance Progress Reports (PPRs) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the cooperative agreement/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 complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's [SAMS Domestic](#).
- 2.) The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [SAMS Domestic](#), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Cooperative Agreements/Grants.

In the event you are having difficulty uploading reports and the ILMS help desk is not providing sufficient assistance, please email ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov.

- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 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 the Competition will allow for the exercise of Non-Competitive Continuations (NCC), applicants must submit program and financial reports on time. The due dates for these reports will be included in the cooperative agreement. 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.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.3i. Program Monitoring and Evaluation information.)

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

F.5. Program Data Requirements: Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Angela Woods , U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C,, SA-5, 3rd Floor , 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, (954) 347-4712, WoodsAN@state.gov.

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

H. Other Information:

Notice:

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards will be subject to periodic programmatic and financial reporting and evaluation requirements as outlined in the NOFO.

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

November 19, 2020