

## INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION (IAF)

### Notice of Funding Opportunity

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| <b>Funding Opportunity Title:</b>            | IAF Research Fellowship Program |
| <b>Type of Award:</b>                        | Cooperative Agreement           |
| <b>Announcement Type:</b>                    | Initial announcement of funding |
| <b>Funding Opportunity Number:</b>           | IAF001                          |
| <b>Total Amount Available:</b>               | \$2,103,000                     |
| <b>Period of Performance:</b>                | Five years, FY23-FY28           |
| <b>Announcement Date:</b>                    | April 6, 2023                   |
| <b>Submission Deadline:</b>                  | May 31, 2023                    |
| <b>Deadline for Questions:</b>               | April 30, 2023                  |
| <b>Anticipated Q&amp;A Publication Date:</b> | May 2, 2023                     |
| <b>Anticipated Award Date:</b>               | July 15, 2023                   |

#### A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

##### Background

The Inter-American Foundation (IAF) partners with local grassroots and civil society organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to advance community-led development. The IAF directly invests in the visions of these local organizations through small grants, networking, and capacity building. The IAF also promotes research that points to promising community-led approaches to addressing pressing development challenges, particularly those facing marginalized communities. In this spirit, IAF's Research Fellowship Program will advance rigorous research on actionable questions about grassroots-based development, benefiting the IAF by generating a pipeline of well-grounded evidence to further strengthen our programming and messaging, and identifying possibilities for scale or replication.

##### Scope of Work

Pending the availability of funds, the Inter-American Foundation will enter into a cooperative agreement with an organization (the Award Recipient) to administer the IAF's Research Fellowship Program (Fellowship Program), for a five-year period spanning FY23-FY28.

The Fellowship Program will advance rigorous field research on actionable questions about grassroots-based development. Through the Fellowship Program, the IAF aims to generate a pipeline of well-grounded evidence to further strengthen IAF's programming, identify possibilities for scale or replication, and contribute to the field of community-led development.

To this end, the Award Recipient will support the administration of up to 10 new awards each fiscal year, starting in FY24, to individuals (Fellows) with the expertise, skills, and creativity to answer pressing questions defined by the IAF and, in some cases, by the Fellows themselves. Applicants may be graduate students (at any level, across all fields, including MBAs), researchers, grant participants (current or former), or other practitioners, and citizens of the U.S. or any country in which the IAF works. Applicants may also be from universities, think-tanks, and other organizations that are interested in co-funding and other arrangements that may entail additional transactions for the Award Recipient.

The IAF reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase funding amounts and participant numbers pending the availability of funds, the needs of the program, and the priorities of the agency.

For the first year of the Fellowship Program, responsibilities will include all the tasks listed below. In subsequent years, the Award Recipient would be responsible additionally for full-year supervision, monitoring and support for both current and new Fellows.

**Task I: Fellowship Competition and Selection.** IAF's Fellowship Program is designed to attract highly qualified applicants, so the Award Recipient will plan and implement a competition and selection process that is widely publicized and effectively run.

- Establish and adhere to the Fellowship Program work plan to be established in consultation with IAF in annual work plan meetings.
- Propose a timeline and action plan to launch the online announcement and application system by a mutually agreed-upon date, including details on eligibility requirements and the application process. Sufficient time should be allowed to give IAF time to review the online content and to suggest possible modifications before the announcement goes live.
- Publicize the Fellowship Program competition through online platforms and emails to reach potential applicants, including through academic networks and other media as agreed with the IAF. The competition should be publicized in the U.S. and in countries across Latin America and the Caribbean where the IAF works.
- Propose a comprehensive strategy for recruitment for the Fellowship Program that will generate a strong pool of qualified applicants. Include specific strategies for recruiting a pool of applicants that represents diversity in terms of identity, race, ethnicity, background, ability, culture, and beliefs, including underserved communities.
- Respond to queries from interested applicants, organizations, and the general public using a dedicated email account hosted by the award recipient for this sole purpose.
- Receive applications online, capturing the information and documents required as part of the application, in a format that is easily analyzed and shareable with the IAF.
- Review applications for eligibility and completeness, and notify those applicants rejected because of noncompliance.

- Provide the IAF guidance on best practices in managing the selection process with its Fellowship Selection Committee, including templates with clear evaluation criteria and tools that facilitate tabulation.
- Propose a plan to notify applicants of their status after the IAF submits a list of approved candidates.
- Draft award letters for the approved candidates and forward them for signature by the IAF President.
- Draft Fellowship Agreements based on the template developed in consultation with the IAF and send them to Fellows for their signatures, following up as needed to confirm their interest.
- Monitor candidates' acceptance and alert the IAF of the need to make possible additional offers to alternates.
- Notify unsuccessful applicants in the format specified by the IAF.

*Task I Deliverables:*

1. Preliminary plan for the year's work that reflects the detailed tasks above, developed in consultation with the IAF, due within 15 days of the *start of the cooperative agreement and annually thereafter*.
2. Application packages for review by the Fellowship Selection Committee.
3. Evaluation criteria and tools for the Fellowship Selection Committee.
4. Award letters drafted for the signature of the IAF President.
5. Agreements drafted following the mutually agreed-upon template tailored to each Fellow for appropriate signatures.

**Task II: Fellowship Communications and Records Management.** The Award Recipient will ensure that applicants and the public have easy access to the information they need to understand the scope of the Fellowship Program and how to apply and that this information is complete, accurate, and up-to-date. The Award Recipient will also capture data from applicants in a way that is easily accessible by the IAF.

- Host, develop, and maintain a webpage dedicated to the Fellowship Program, with information about the Fellowship Program (e.g., description of the Fellowship Program, scope of the research topics to be considered each FY, eligibility criteria, and restrictions), application instructions, the application itself, FAQs, and whom to contact for additional information. The application system and/or application process must also be accessible to applicants with disabilities.
- All application, selection, and individual award data should be entered and maintained in a sortable, searchable format/system that can be shared with the IAF. All statistical

information gathered and compiled by the Award Recipient on the Fellowship Program participants should be electronically transferable to the databases maintained by the IAF.

- Respond to Fellows' queries via a dedicated email account to be hosted by the Award Recipient for this sole purpose.
- Maintain and store files on the grants and the Fellows during and following the expiration of the sub-award period as established in each Fellowship Agreement.

*Task II deliverables:*

1. User-friendly, effectively designed webpage that describes IAF's Fellowship Program, including application requirements and process, and provides links to application materials, FAQs, and contact information.
2. Timely notifications to the IAF on issues that need resolution (e.g., Fellows' requests to leave the research site, changes in research plan, and offset of benefits from another donor).
3. Meetings and conference calls as requested by the IAF.

**Task III: Fellowship Grant Management.** The Award Recipient will manage the Fellowship Program, from disbursing funds to Fellows, to ensuring oversight and regularly updating the IAF on program implementation.

- Disburse funds for each Fellow of \$20,000 per year on average, via electronic transfer to the respective accounts of the Fellows, to cover quarterly/semester stipends, airfares, and other benefits per the Fellowship Agreement.
- Research and select an appropriate emergency health insurance plan for Fellows that covers at minimum, and at reasonable cost, medical emergencies and evacuation services in the event of a situation that might compromise a Fellow's health, well-being, or security. Enroll each Fellow in this health insurance plan for the duration of their Fellowship.
- Develop and provide Fellows with Fellowship policies, disbursement schedule, reporting responsibilities, emergency contact and other procedures deemed necessary by the Award Recipient and IAF.
- Monitor Fellows' compliance with specified requirements for the timely submission of written products for distribution by the IAF, as directed by the IAF.
- Electronically request, receive, and review mid-term and final participant reports. The award recipient should notify IAF when reports are completed.
- Monitor Fellows' compliance with all terms of the Fellowship Agreement and IAF policies and procedures, including, but not limited to, the application of the Fly-America Act requirements and the submission of the Fellowship deliverables due no later than 60 days following the expiration of the research period.

- Collect Fellow’s research deliverables, review for completeness, and provide them to the IAF within 15 days of receipt from Fellows. When necessary, follow up with Fellows to obtain complete final submissions.
- When necessary, prepare appropriate documentation for the IAF requesting termination or revocation of a Fellowship Agreement. Take appropriate action to recoup funds that may have been previously distributed to a Fellow whose agreement has been terminated or revoked.
- Maintain and implement, as needed, a plan for assisting Fellows in the event of an emergency resulting from a medical condition, natural disaster, security concern or other factor that might compromise an individual’s health, well-being or safety.
- Monitor Fellowship Program budget to stay within established budget projections.
- Submit timely invoices following a schedule to be determined in consultation with the IAF.
- Participate in annual planning meetings with the IAF focused on overall improvements in program administration, outreach, enrichment, follow-on, evaluation, etc. Draft meeting notes to outline any agreed-upon actions and share these notes with the IAF in a timely manner.

*Task III deliverables:*

1. Disburse funds for each grant of \$20,000 a year on average, via electronic transfer to the respective accounts of the Fellows, on a mutually agreed upon schedule.
2. Enroll each Fellow in the award recipient’s emergency health insurance plan.
3. Fellowship policies, disbursement schedule, reporting responsibilities, emergency contact and other procedures deemed necessary by the award recipient and IAF.
4. Synthesis of discussion and action items from annual planning meetings.

**Task IV: Annual Fellow Orientation Workshop and Travel.** As a way to improve Fellows’ understanding of the IAF and its grantees, and to promote peer-to-peer learning across Fellows, the award recipient will coordinate an annual Fellow Orientation Workshop virtually, at IAF headquarters in Washington, D.C., or in one of the countries where the IAF works.

- Logistical support may include, but is not limited to, identifying the site for the orientation workshop; arranging facilities; arranging air travel consistent with federal travel regulations, hotel accommodations and ground transportation; organizing technical support; and arranging catering as appropriate.
- The Award Recipient may be called upon to address all logistical issues arising immediately before, during and immediately after the Fellow Orientation Workshops.

*Task IV deliverables:*

1. Programmatic support for one annual Fellow Orientation Workshop, whether virtual, at IAF offices in Washington, D.C., or in one of the countries where the IAF works.

**Task V: Reporting.** The Award Recipient will be required to submit the following reports to the IAF:

1. **Program Reports:** The Award Recipient must contribute program data to the IAF annually by Sept 30, the last day of each FY. These reports should include the names and affiliations of each Fellow funded during that fiscal year, the amount of their Fellowship, their research topic, and their abstract (taken from the Fellows' final submissions). For Fellows who have not delivered their research deliverables, the Award Recipient should include a note on when they will submit.
2. **Financial Reports:** During the cooperative agreement period, the Award Recipient will provide the IAF every six (6) months with Financial Reports. These reports should capture the amount transferred to date, total paid expenditures, current balance, unpaid commitments, and projected balance by Fellow and administrative line items. The final reports are due within thirty (30) days of the termination or expiration of the Fellowship Agreement.
3. **Other Reports:** As requested by the IAF, the Award Recipient should prepare summary reports on the applicant pool (e.g., number of applications, trends, distribution of applications and Fellows by country, region, demographics, educational background, and research topic), placement, projected costs, statistics, or expenditures, or other program information as necessary.

*Task V. deliverables:*

1. Program, financial, and other reports, as described above

### **IAF Involvement**

In a cooperative agreement, the IAF is substantially involved in program activities beyond routine monitoring. In this cooperative agreement, the IAF will be responsible for the following:

1. Participating in and approving the design and direction of all program activities, policies, and guidelines.
2. Approving and providing input on program timelines, agendas, and administrative procedures.
3. Defining and clearly communicating the scope of the Fellowship Program each fiscal year in terms of the specific research questions that the IAF seeks to address. The IAF envisions using most of its allocated Fellowships to answer these specific questions, while also being open to other relevant questions that Fellows may propose.

4. Reviewing and approving all Fellowship Program recruitment, publicity, and outreach materials.
5. Coordinating with IAF's Fellowship Advisory Committee in reviewing candidates and identifying finalists, and communicating the decisions to the Award Recipient. (The Award Recipient will then communicate the decisions to Fellows using the dedicated email account).
6. Planning and facilitating the annual meeting of the Fellowship Advisory Committee to select Fellows and alternates.
7. Planning and facilitating an annual Fellowship Program orientation. (The Award Recipient will coordinate and manage the logistics and travel, as described in Task IV).
8. Facilitate virtual check-ins with Fellows throughout their tenure and as they produce and disseminate the findings of their research deliverables to broader audiences at the end of the Fellowship.
9. Approving changes to Fellows' proposed scope of research, including engagement with a local grassroots organization, location of research, and timing of deliverables;
10. Approving decisions related to special circumstances or problems throughout the duration of the Fellowship Program.

## **B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

**Type of Award:** Cooperative Agreement

**Fiscal Year Funds:** 2023

**Approximate Number of Awards:** 1

**Minimal "Floor" of Award:** None

**Maximum "Ceiling" of Award:** \$2,103,000

**Anticipated Award Date:** July 15, 2023

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** July 15, 2028

## **C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

To be eligible to receive an award, all applicants must have a unique entity identifier (UEI) that reflects the organization's legal name and current, physical address, as well as a valid registration in the System for Award Management ([www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov)) during the entirety of the cooperative agreement period.

Applicants are only allowed to submit one proposal per applicant.

## D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Applicants should submit the following documents as part of a complete application. Ensure that your proposal is complete and thorough, reflects your most relevant and compelling experiences, and responds to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible. There will be no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials.

### 1. Proposal Narrative

In a maximum of 10 single-spaced pages (12pt font, 1 inch margins), provide the information detailed below.

- a. **Cover letter.** Summarize why the applicant believes it is a good fit for this cooperative agreement.
- b. **Experience managing fellowship/scholarship programs in the US and LAC.** Describe concrete examples of past experience with managing fellowships/scholarships, research fellowships, working with students/researchers in the U.S. and across LAC, or other subject matter expertise that demonstrates the applicant organization's ability to effectively fulfill all requirements of the NOFO.
- c. **Experience generating competitive pools of applicants from the US and LAC.** The IAF envisions generating a competitive Fellowship Program that draws a creative, well-qualified, and diverse pool of candidates from the US and across LAC, including candidates from various academic disciplines; universities, think tanks, research centers, and other organizations with research capacities; and those who may work as independent researchers. What matters is the relevance and quality of their application. Provide concrete examples of past experience with generating competitive pools of applicants for similar programs and the tools you used to get there (e.g., specific examples of websites, social media, publications, presence at events).
- d. **Experience managing events and travel.** Describe specific experiences in administering events and travel, like that required for the annual Fellows Orientation Workshop.
- e. **Ability to manage a program in Spanish, English, Portuguese, and French.** Since the Fellowship Program will be open to applicants across the US and LAC, the award recipient must have the ability to effectively engage with Fellows in these languages. Describe the applicant's experience and abilities to do so.
- f. **Project Management.** Present the proposed staffing pattern, indicating the senior staff responsible for program oversight and implementation, with their job descriptions and resume. Other key personnel may be identified during award negotiations and/or the period of performance.
- g. **Work Plan.** Present a proposed timeline for the required tasks for the first year.

### 2. Proposal Budget

Using the Proposal Budget Template, located in the Related Documents section of the Grants.gov posting, provide a detailed proposed budget. You may insert as many lines as needed.

### **Budget Guidelines**

The total funding request for the administration of the Fellowship Program should not exceed \$2,103,000 pending the availability of funds. The IAF reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the Fellowship Program and the availability of funds.

The IAF anticipates funding about 10 Fellows per FY, starting in FY24, with awards ranging from \$15,000 - \$30,000 each. We anticipate allocating most of the Fellowships (up to 8 per FY) to candidates who are nationals from countries in LAC, with the other slots available for U.S. nationals.

Please note the following allowable costs:

- Allowable administrative costs include items such as staff salaries and benefits, and indirect costs. The proposal should present administrative unit costs that accurately reflect the level of staff effort.
- Allowable program costs include items such as website/online application/database management, publicity and outreach, and an annual Fellowship Program orientation for new Fellows.
- Allowable cost per Fellow includes stipends and health insurance.

Additional allowable Fellowship Program costs may be proposed and/or funded in consultation with the IAF, pending the availability of funds.

### **Application Submission**

The application, consisting of the Proposal Narrative and Proposal Budget, should be submitted to [proposals+fellowships@iaf.gov](mailto:proposals+fellowships@iaf.gov) by the date specified in the NOFO. There are no exceptions to this deadline. **The subject line of the email should include the text “IAF Research Fellowship Program.”**

The documents may only be submitted in the following formats: Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF).

## **E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **E.1 Review Process**

The IAF will review all proposals submitted to [proposals+fellowships@iaf.gov](mailto:proposals+fellowships@iaf.gov) by the submission deadline 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 subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to IAF’s Fellowship Task Team for review. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the IAF’s President and CEO.

## **E.2 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. Compelling argument of the applicant's suitability to manage the Fellowship Program.**

Proposals should include a cover letter that effectively summarizes why the applicant organization believes it is a good fit for this cooperative agreement.

**2. Experience managing fellowship/scholarship programs in the US and LAC.** Proposals should include concrete examples that demonstrate past experience with managing fellowships/scholarships, research fellowships, working with students/researchers in the U.S. and across Latin America and the Caribbean, or other subject matter expertise that demonstrates the applicant organization's ability to effectively fulfill all requirements of the NOFO.

**3. Experience generating competitive pools of applicants from the US and LAC.** Proposals should include concrete examples that demonstrate past experience with generating competitive pools of applicants for similar programs and the tools you used to get there (e.g., specific examples of websites, social media, publications, presence at events).

**4. Experience managing events and travel.** Proposals should include specific experiences in administering events and travel, like that required for an annual Fellowship Program orientation.

**5. Ability to manage a program in Spanish, English, Portuguese, and French.** Proposals should articulate the applicant's ability to effectively engage with Fellows in these languages.

**6. Project Management.** Proposals should include detailed information about the proposed staffing pattern, indicating the senior staff responsible for program oversight and implementation, with their job descriptions and resume. Other key personnel may be identified during award negotiations and/or the period of performance.

**7. Work Plan.** Proposals should include a comprehensive timeline for the required tasks for the first year.

## **F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal IAF procedures. The successful applicant will receive a cooperative agreement from the IAF, which contains additional information regarding the terms and conditions and reporting requirements. The cooperative agreement shall be the only binding authorizing document between the Award Recipient and the IAF. The cooperative agreement will be signed by the IAF President & CEO, and transmitted to the Award Recipient for their review and signature.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the IAF following the completion of the review process.

## G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

For questions about this announcement, contact [proposals+fellowships@iaf.gov](mailto:proposals+fellowships@iaf.gov).

**All correspondence with the IAF concerning this NOFO should include the text “IAF Research Fellowship Program” in the subject line of the email.** Any questions should also include the corresponding document title and page number(s) with your questions, to ensure that the IAF is responding to the appropriate text. It is recommended that any prospective applicant submitting a question regarding this NOFO submit it in writing by the Deadline for Questions. Applicants can submit questions while the NOFO is open, although answers will not be possible by the Anticipated Q&A Publication Date if submitted after the Deadline for Questions.

**Please note that all questions regarding this NOFO, and their answers, will be publicly posted for all other prospective applicants to review, absent the name of the organization submitting the question, therefore please do not submit any proprietary information as a part of your question(s).** To maintain fairness and transparency in competition, the IAF will not answer substantive NOFO questions except when posting questions and answers to the Q&A document on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). It is strongly recommended that all potential applicants subscribe to this solicitation’s page on Grants.gov to be alerted when the Q&A document is posted to the site. Please note that the Q&A document may be updated if additional answers to questions are made available.

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