

**U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2024 Professional Fellows Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0010231

Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.415

Deadline for Applications: April 5, 2024

Executive Summary: The Global Leaders Division in the Office of Citizen Exchanges at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) invites proposal submissions for the FY 2024 Professional Fellows Program (PFP) in the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa, South and Central Asia, and the Western Hemisphere. The PFP is a two-way global exchange program designed to promote mutual understanding, enhance leadership and professional skills, and build lasting and sustainable partnerships between mid-level emerging leaders from foreign countries and the United States to address shared challenges under the themes of Governance and Society, Economic Empowerment, and Civic Engagement. The defining element of the program for non-U.S. Fellows is a substantive five- to six-week exchange program, including a four-week individually tailored fellowship placement in a U.S. organization.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A.1. Authority

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

A.2. Purpose

The purpose of the PFP is to:

1. Promote mutual understanding and lasting partnerships between mid-level emerging leaders from foreign countries and the United States;
2. Provide opportunities for non-U.S. and American emerging leaders to collaborate and share ideas, approaches, and strategies regarding pressing challenges;

3. Enhance leadership and professional skills for both non-U.S. and American Fellows to encourage positive change in their workplaces and communities; and
4. Build a global network of like-minded professionals.

A.3. Program Specific Guidelines

A.3.a. Overview of the Professional Fellows Program:

All proposals must include two-way exchange programs that comply with the country and theme guidance referenced further below in the section entitled, “Themes and Eligible Countries.”

The non-U.S. Fellows will travel to the United States for a professional fellowship that will be five- to six-weeks in length. The fellowship will include an individually tailored placement, “the fellowship placement,” that is a minimum of four weeks in length. The U.S.-based exchange component will conclude with a capstone three-day Professional Fellows Congress in Washington, DC, attended by the participating Professional Fellows. Several months after the non-U.S. Fellows complete the U.S. program, the U.S. Fellows will travel overseas on an American outbound program that is approximately two weeks in length and directly supports follow-on projects and long-term collaboration.

Program participants, referred to as “Professional Fellows” in this program, are defined as those individuals who travel under award funding from their country of origin to a designated exchange country. Proposals must include approximately two to three non-U.S. Fellows for every one U.S. Fellow. **Employees of the award recipient or any sub-award recipients are not eligible to participate in the Professional Fellows Program and cannot be included as program participants.**

Applicant organizations without an existing organizational presence in the target country must identify an overseas partner (“in-country partner”) with whom they propose to collaborate. ECA and the Public Diplomacy Section of the respective U.S. embassies reserve the right to approve in-country partners. In addition, proposals must demonstrate capacity to secure effective and appropriate host placements for the non-U.S. Fellows in the United States.

A.3.b. Key Administrative Elements:

Proposals should fully demonstrate capacity to administer the following key administrative elements of the program:

Recruit and Select Non-U.S. Fellows:

In collaboration with ECA, award recipients will recruit and select the non-U.S. Fellows. Award recipients are required to develop an online program announcement and program application.

Non-U.S. Fellows will be required to be recruited in accordance with the specific guidance included below, as well as at the A.3.d. section further below entitled, “Themes and Eligible Countries.”

Non-U.S. Fellows must be selected through an open, merit-based, competitive process in consultation with ECA and the Public Diplomacy Section of the respective U.S. embassy. While the Public Diplomacy Section will be involved with participant selection, full responsibility for program coordination and implementation lies with the award recipient.

At a minimum, the participant selection criteria for non-U.S. Fellows for the PFP must include the below:

1. emerging leaders in government, civil society, or the private sector who have demonstrated expertise pertaining to the respective theme of each proposal;
2. mid-level professionals, 25 to 40 years old at the time of participation in the program, who, at a minimum, are currently employed and have two or more years of relevant professional work experience;
3. candidates who have demonstrated proficiency in both written and oral English that qualifies them to have “working-level knowledge of English” that has been verified by the award recipient;
4. candidates who are self-directed and able to work effectively in a cross-cultural setting; and
5. candidates who are genuinely interested in developing an individual project of their own selection in their home workplace or community.

Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) and Arrival Orientation:

For non-U.S. Fellows and U.S. Fellows, the award recipient will be responsible for conducting a pre-departure orientation (PDO) and an arrival orientation. The PDO for non-U.S. Fellows should be conducted prior to departing their home country and should be coordinated with the Public Diplomacy Section. For non-U.S. Fellows, the PDO and arrival orientation should cover, at a minimum:

1. travel logistics, including arrival information and J-1 visa regulations;
2. project goals and program expectations;
3. proposed U.S. fellowship placements;
4. a detailed Program Schedule including program activities and deadlines, information about the community where each Fellow will be located, and information about the Professional Fellows Congress; and
5. a briefing on cross-cultural issues including day-to-day considerations of living and working in the United States as well as professional standards of conduct.

U.S. Program for the Non-U.S. Fellows:

The U.S. program for the non-U.S. Fellows should be substantive and be approximately five- to six-weeks in length. Key program elements of the U.S. program must include:

1. A pre-departure orientation (PDO) in the home country before departure to the United States;
2. An arrival orientation in the United States;
3. A substantive four-week fellowship placement in a U.S. organization that is tailored to each non-U.S. Fellow's work/interests;
4. Participation in the concluding Professional Fellows Congress in Washington, DC and Congress-related activities including online leadership training; and
5. A plan for post-fellowship engagement with the non-U.S. Fellows.

U.S. Fellowship Placement for each Non-U.S. Fellow:

"Fellowship placement" refers to the program component where the Fellow is placed in an organization relevant to their professional experience and/or interests. Each award recipient must secure a substantive and individually tailored fellowship placement that is a minimum of four weeks (20 weekdays) in length, preferably at least three weeks in advance of the arrival of the non-U.S. Fellows in the United States. The purpose of the fellowship placement is to provide non-U.S. Fellows with direct experience with the day-to-day workings of a U.S. workplace and the opportunity to form professional relationships with their colleagues. Some previous examples of fellowship placements for non-U.S. Fellows include non-governmental organizations (NGOs); legislative/government offices at the national, state, and local levels; and private businesses.

Proposals should discuss how the award recipient will recruit and select U.S. fellowship placement organizations. To ensure that each non-U.S. Fellow has a substantive professional experience, each fellowship placement should involve the commitment of a designated placement host who understands the goals and objectives of the PFP.

Proposals should plan for securing one fellowship placement for each non-U.S. Fellow during the U.S. program, rather than multiple, short-term placements with different U.S. organizations. Proposals that plan for one fellowship placement for each non-U.S. Fellow will be deemed more competitive under the Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives review criterion. Special emphasis should be placed on facilitating communication between non-U.S. Fellows and their respective U.S. fellowship placement organization before the actual fellowship placement.

Supplementary programming activities, in person or online, may be built into the four-week fellowship placement period, such as group workshops or other enrichment activities. Every effort should be made for the non-U.S. Fellows to engage, while in the United States, with a

range of Americans regarding their work and their home country. Program activities in the United States for non-U.S. Fellows can include community/school presentations, a volunteer/community service element, a homestay with an American family, media interviews, etc.

Professional Fellows Congress for the Non-U.S. Fellows:

At the conclusion of the U.S. fellowship placement, the non-U.S. Fellows will participate in the Professional Fellows Congress tentatively scheduled for spring 2026 in Washington, D.C. The Congress will provide the non-U.S. Fellows:

1. the opportunity to network with colleagues from around the world, share their U.S. experiences, and learn from the experiences of other Professional Fellows;
2. a contextual framework for the broader fellowship experience and exchange program;
3. an opportunity to examine ways an individual, organization, or interest group can generate change for the common good; and
4. a greater understanding of public diplomacy in the global community.

The Congress will be implemented by a designated award recipient, selected through a separate open competition, with the assistance of ECA’s Global Leaders Division and the collaboration of all PFP award recipients. Please see the FY 2024 Professional Fellows Congress NOFO (Funding Opportunity Number SFOP0010232) on Grants.gov and ECA’s website. Proposals must demonstrate a willingness and ability to participate collaboratively in regularly scheduled planning meetings for the Congress via teleconference and/or online forum. In addition, all PFP award recipients will be expected to assist with identifying possible speakers, facilitating break-out sessions at the Congress, supporting Congress-related “products” or activities, integrating online leadership training into the fellowship period, preparing Fellows for active participation during the Congress, etc. This collaboration is critical to making each Congress a success. For additional information regarding budgeting for costs associated with the Professional Fellows Congress, please see further below at the D.15. section entitled “Allowable Costs.”

American Outbound Programs (for U.S. Fellows to travel to the participating countries):

American outbound programs for U.S. Fellows should be substantive and approximately two weeks in length. American outbound programs should build upon the U.S. program; allow the U.S. Fellows to conduct joint programming with the non-U.S. Fellows and their colleagues, especially regarding the non-U.S. Fellows’ individual projects; directly support U.S. public diplomacy objectives; and advance the PFP goals of building lasting professional partnerships. As appropriate, the non-U.S. Fellows should be involved in the conceptualization, scheduling, and implementation of American outbound programs.

Proposals should describe the participant selection process for the American outbound programs. U.S. Fellows should be primarily selected from those individuals who serve as placement hosts to the non-U.S. Fellows and those who had significant engagement with the non-U.S. Fellow during the U.S. program.

While there is no set age range for the U.S. Fellows, the same 25 to 40 years old age range as non-U.S. Fellows is preferred. Upon completion of the selection process, the proposed participants for American outbound programs with summary information including biographical information, proposed destination cities, country, and timeframe, should be submitted for approval to the appropriate program officer in the Global Leaders Division.

Collaboration with the Public Diplomacy Section of the Respective Embassy(-ies):

Award recipients must work closely with the Public Diplomacy Section of the respective embassy(-ies) to develop plans for program implementation, including the recruitment and selection of non-U.S. Fellows, pre-departure orientations (PDOs), and other in-country program activities. It is important that all proposed American outbound program schedules are reviewed by the Global Leaders Division and the Public Diplomacy Section a minimum of one month prior to the start of any American outbound program. Since many U.S. Fellows will be experts on issues pertinent to various U.S. foreign policy objectives in the respective country, the willingness of the U.S. Fellows to take part in public diplomacy outreach can greatly complement in-country public diplomacy programs, thereby enhancing the impact of the American outbound program and its value to the U.S. embassy.

Post-Fellowship Engagement:

Proposals should describe how post-Fellowship engagement will be approached after the non-U.S. Fellows return to their home country. Proposals should articulate how the award recipient will provide ECA with regular updates on the non-U.S. Fellows' individual projects as well as professional successes following their participation in the PFP. Proposals should describe how new program alumni will be introduced to and connected with past program alumni, such as through web-based technology, social media, and alumni programming efforts.

A.3.c. Projected Program Timeline:

ECA envisions the PFP calendar as follows:

- October 2024 – April 2025: Conduct program planning and develop program materials.
- May – November 2025: Develop, launch, and conclude the recruitment and selection process for the non-U.S. Fellows for the spring 2026 U.S. Program.

- January 2026 – March 2026: Secure U.S. placement organizations for the spring 2026 U.S. program;
- April 2026 – June 2026 (tentatively scheduled): Travel of non-U.S. Fellows for the spring 2026 U.S. program. **Travel should be carefully planned around the Professional Fellows Congress in Washington, DC, tentatively scheduled for spring 2026;** and
- July 2026 – March 2027: Planning and conducting American outbound programs for U.S. Fellows to travel overseas;

A.3.d. Themes and Eligible Countries

All proposals should carefully incorporate the specific requirements noted below, especially those that are unique to a particular region. **ECA reserves the right to modify the final list of participating countries and regions, and the scope of any resulting cooperative agreement, including in any of the subsequent solicitations.**

1. GOVERNANCE AND SOCIETY

Proposals submitted under the Governance and Society theme can include professionals involved in the legislative process; governance; public administration; policy making; political campaigns/political parties; the legal field; journalism; non-governmental organizations; innovation and technology; or empowering women, children, minorities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized populations.

Proposals submitted under the Governance and Society theme should explore the relationship between the public sector and broader society. Proposals should support professionals involved in the legislative process; good governance; public administration; public affairs; policy; political campaigns; law and judicial reform.

Proposals submitted under this theme might include an emphasis on rule of law; access to justice; civil liberties and political rights, citizen engagement, and advocacy; participatory government; anti-corruption; transparency and accountability; cyber security; digital technologies; media; innovation and technology; and climate change. Fellowship placements may be in legislative/government offices at the national, state, or local level; non-governmental organizations; or other relevant organizations.

Sub-Saharan Africa Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

East Asia and Pacific Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include all of the following countries: Burma, Hong Kong (PRC), Mongolia, and Papua New Guinea.

Europe and Eurasia Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

Middle East and North Africa Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia.

South and Central Asia Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Western Hemisphere Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Peru. Proposals should include a special focus on promoting the social inclusion of marginalized groups such as people of African and/or indigenous descent.

2. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Proposals submitted under the Economic Empowerment theme can include professionals involved in entrepreneurship; small and medium enterprises; start-ups; incubators/accelerators; social entrepreneurship; business administration; business education; community training programs; non-governmental organizations; or government.

Proposals submitted under the Economic Empowerment theme should explore how systems can support innovation and sustainable economic development. Proposals should support professionals involved in small and medium business development; business administration; business education; economic development policy; social entrepreneurship, community training programs; innovation and technology; and emerging technologies.

Proposals submitted under this theme might include an emphasis on starting or growing small businesses; community-based and educational training programs; global competency and employment readiness; the role of government in promoting economic growth; sustainable development; education to employment; climate change; and the economic empowerment of women, youth, minorities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized populations. Fellowship placements may be in businesses; non-governmental organizations; technology hubs; economic/business-related organizations; or government offices.

Sub-Saharan Africa Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

East Asia and Pacific Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include all of the following countries: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna.

Europe and Eurasia Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greenland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Ukraine.

Middle East and North Africa Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include all of the following countries: Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and West Bank/Gaza.

South and Central Asia Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include all of the following countries: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Western Hemisphere Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Proposals should include a special focus on addressing the root causes of irregular migration.

3. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Proposals submitted under the Civic Engagement theme can include professionals involved in non-governmental administration; community development; advocacy; education; journalism; law; youth initiatives; strengthening resilient communities; or empowering women, children, minorities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized populations.

Proposals submitted under the Civic Engagement theme should explore how individuals can organize around community issues and support professionals involved in non-governmental management; community development; advocacy; education; journalism; law; youth initiatives;

and the empowerment of minorities including women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized populations.

Proposals submitted under this theme might include an emphasis in non-profit management; community-based policy and advocacy; digital technologies; environmental planning and readiness; staff training and development; volunteer management; community outreach and engagement; creating strategic partnerships and coalition building; storytelling; conflict resolution and peace building; resilient communities; and climate change. Fellowship placements may be in non-governmental organizations; community-based organizations; civic education organizations; advocacy organizations; government offices; or relevant organizations.

Sub-Saharan Africa Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

East Asia and Pacific Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include all of the following countries: Hong Kong, Mongolia, People's Republic of China (PRC), and Taiwan.

Europe and Eurasia Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Türkiye, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

Middle East and North Africa Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

South and Central Asia Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Western Hemisphere Eligible Countries:

Proposals must include at least four of the following countries: Argentina, Barbados, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Trinidad and Tobago. Proposals should include a special emphasis on building resilient institutions and countering malign outside influence.

A.3.e. Contact Information by Region

The program officers noted below are available to answer questions regarding programs in the various regions:

AF: Arin Wooten and Karin Brandenburg
WootenAA@state.gov
BrandenburgKL@state.gov

NEA: Chris Warnke
WarnkeCJ@state.gov

EAP: Chris Warnke
WarnkeCJ@state.gov

SCA: Karin Brandenburg
BrandenburgKL@state.gov

EUR: Arin Wooten and Karin Brandenburg
WootenAA@state.gov
BrandenburgKL@state.gov

WHA: Karin Brandenburg
BrandenburgKL@state.gov

A.4. Recipient Responsibilities

Recipient responsibilities include:

- a. For non-U.S. Fellows, develop and implement a five to six-week U.S. program that includes: a pre-departure orientation (PDO); an arrival orientation; a minimum four-week individually tailored placement in a U.S. organization; and participation in the three-day Professional Fellows Congress. Recipient organizations are expected to participate in Congress-related planning activities and conduct thorough monitoring of the placement experience of the non-U.S. Fellows;
- b. For U.S. Fellows, develop and implement an approximate two to three-week American outbound program that includes: coordination with the non-U.S. Fellow(s) from the respective foreign country, a pre-departure orientation (PDO); an arrival orientation; and a substantive American outbound program;
- c. Participate in an organizational meeting for award recipients of the PFP that may be held virtually or in-person in Washington, DC, on a mutually agreed upon date. If in-person in Washington, DC, the meeting would be approximately two days in length.
- d. For both non-U.S. and U.S. Fellows, arrange and cover the cost of all appropriate program-related travel such as transportation, lodging, and meals and incidental expenses, etc.;
- e. Comply with all federal regulations regarding the use of U.S. government funds including the Fly America Act regarding international plane tickets for both non-U.S. and U.S. Fellows.
- f. Procure Visas for Entry into the United States and Foreign Countries. For non-U.S. Fellows to obtain J-1 visas to enter the United States, award recipients will need to work

with ECA and the Public Diplomacy Section at the respective U.S. embassy. Award recipients will need to collect and submit all required biographical information for non-U.S. Fellows to ECA = for issuance of the DS-2019 form required for J-1 visas. To procure foreign visas for the U.S. Fellows, if necessary, award recipients will work directly with the respective foreign embassy in the United States.

- g. Enroll both non-U.S. and U.S. Fellows in the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) for the duration of the actual exchange programs and issue ASPE identifications cards;
- h. Provide reasonable accommodation to individuals with disabilities who may be selected for participation in the program as non-U.S. Fellows or U.S. Fellows.
- i. In collaboration with the ECA Global Leaders Division and the Public Diplomacy Sections, develop a plan for incorporating the Public Diplomacy Sections in all aspects of the program, including for participant recruitment and selection, pre-departure orientations (PDOs), post-program debriefs, American outbound programs, alumni engagement, etc.;
- j. Develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy for selecting non-U.S. and U.S. Fellows that clearly delineates the participation selection criteria for the program and adheres to ECA's goals for a merit-based competition;
- k. Develop a comprehensive application review and selection process for Fellows and keep the ECA Global Leaders Division informed while the process is underway. The review and selection process should include virtual or in-person English language interviews for semi-finalists during the second round of the selection process to ensure that all applicants selected as non-U.S. Fellows will be able to communicate effectively in their U.S. placements;
- l. Design and launch a web-based application that can collect and share program applicant information with the ECA Global Leaders Division. The application link should be shared with the Division in advance of beginning recruitment;
- m. Utilize web-based outreach tools to facilitate pre-program communication with selected Fellows, partner organizations, and U.S. placement organizations. The type of information envisioned to be communicated to Fellows before the actual exchange program begins includes important program-related information, community resources for the respective U.S. placement city, pre-program assignments, individual project expectations, Congress-related information, etc.;
- n. Conduct comprehensive PDOs and arrival orientations for both non-U.S. and U.S. Fellows. During the arrival orientation in the U.S. for non-U.S. Fellows, award recipients should devote time for non-U.S. Fellows to consider and focus on individual projects for implementation upon return to their respective home countries. Award recipients should encourage non-U.S. Fellows to create an action plan for their individual project as well as to communicate with non-U.S. Fellows upon returning home about their progress and challenges regarding project implementation;

- o. Conduct a substantive orientation for U.S. placement organizations that includes the provision of programmatic guidelines and materials, as well as a delineation of roles and responsibilities;
- p. In coordination with the ECA Global Leaders Division and the Professional Fellows Congress award recipient, support the planning of the spring 2026 Professional Fellows Congress in Washington, DC. **Note: For the Congress, four nights lodging expenses will be paid for by the Professional Fellows Congress award recipient. Organizations interested in additional nights before or after the Congress will need to be paid for and budgeted appropriately for by each recipient organization implementing a Professional Fellows Program award;**
- q. Integrate the Professional Fellows Congress leadership development training module into the program;
- r. Evaluate the program and its impact on non-U.S. and U.S. Fellows during the exchange programs and after they return to their home countries, with a particular emphasis placed on identifying and highlighting participant achievements. Award recipients may be expected to assist with administering ECA-generated pre- and post-surveys to all Fellows. Award recipients can employ a professional evaluator not associated with the award recipient to collect and analyze data, draw conclusions, and make recommendations when warranted;
- s. Utilize web-based technology to enhance and support key goals and objectives of the program, such as facilitating networking among program participants, streamlining administrative processes, strengthening awareness of the PFP, encouraging professional resource sharing, and supporting continued professional development.
- t. Develop a public outreach plan that includes an effective social media strategy. “Storytelling” is a vital element of successful public diplomacy programs. The public outreach plan should strengthen the identity of the Professional Fellows Program, increase the program’s visibility within local communities in the United States and abroad, and raise awareness of the importance and impact of educational exchanges. Award recipients should make every effort to engage via social media with non-U.S. and U.S. Fellows, relevant U.S. Embassies, ECA, and other key stakeholders.
- u. Manage participant emergencies in collaboration with the ECA Global Leaders Division.
- v. Manage financial aspects of the program (including timely disbursement of participant stipends, housing allowances, accident and sickness benefits, hosting agreements, and other activity costs) and promptly report any irregularities in the budget or spending to the ECA Global Leaders Division and the ECA Grant Officer;
- w. Participate in a mid-program review with the ECA Global Leaders Division that identifies any possible programmatic or budget concerns;
- x. Report programmatic, financial, and statistical information to the ECA Global Leaders Division including a brief monthly email update and/or call outlining general

programmatic activities conducted during the past month and anticipated to be conducted in the upcoming month; and

- y. Respond fully and promptly to requests for program information from the ECA Global Leaders Division.

A.5. Substantial Involvement:

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring, as follows:

- a. Participate and provide guidance in the design and execution of all program activities and program timelines, including approving the selection of all non-U.S. and U.S. Fellows, U.S. placement organizations for the non-U.S. Fellows, and program schedules;
- b. Approve changes to partner organizations, including in-country partner organizations and sub-award recipients; and
- c. Monitor the implementation of the program.

A.6. What to Include in Your Proposal

Proposals should consist of five main electronic files in addition to the required SF-424 forms:

1. an executive summary;
2. a proposal narrative;
3. a budget;
4. a budget narrative; and
5. attachments.

Note: All of the documents described below that can be submitted as attachments should be submitted in one document labelled "Attachments" as opposed to submitting multiple individual attachment documents.

1. Executive Summary

The Executive Summary should be one page in length and include: the program name (the Professional Fellows Program), the theme under which the proposal is being submitted, the countries proposed to be involved in the program, the goals of the program, the names of all sub-award recipient organizations responsible for program implementation, the numbers of Fellows (both non-U.S. and American), the number and approximate dates of proposed exchanges, and the expected placement locations in the United States. Proposals must also clearly state for each exchange component the number of days that Fellows will spend in-country excluding international travel days.

2. Proposal Narrative

In 20, double-spaced pages, the proposal narrative should address all items specifically referenced in this NOFO, in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI), and those items noted below:

Program Goals, Objectives, Anticipated Outcomes: Proposals should include a clear, succinct statement of program goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes that expand upon the PFP's goals. Objectives should be described in specific, measurable, and realistic terms that are achievable within the scope of the program, both in terms of time and funding.

Background Information on the applicant organization and all sub-award recipient organizations (both U.S.-based organizations and foreign-based organizations): For each organization, the mission, the date of establishment, relevant expertise, past programmatic work, and ongoing programmatic work should be described. Previous awards from the Bureau since 2014 (especially those involving the exchange of early to mid-career professionals) should be listed by office (Citizen Exchanges, International Visitors, Academic Exchanges, etc.), project name, countries involved, year of the federal award, and dollar amount of the award. Proposals should describe previous collaboration with proposed partner organizations, as well as clearly delineate a division of responsibilities between all organizations that will be involved in the project.

3. Budget

For more budget information, please see further below at the D.15. section entitled, Allowable Costs", as well as the PSI.

4. Budget Narrative

Proposals must include a detailed budget narrative.

5. Attachments

The items below and any other program materials should be included in a document labelled "Attachments":

- 1) Draft program implementation materials such as the U.S. program schedule, American outbound program schedules, the program announcement, the program application, the agendas for the pre-departure orientations and the arrival orientations, materials for any other key program elements, etc.;
- 2) Letters of commitment and/or letters of support from: 1) proposed sub-recipient organizations (both U.S.-based and foreign-based); 2) proposed or past Fellowship placement organizations; and 3) preferably, from past exchange program participants;
- 3) Resumes of proposed key staff at the applicant organization and all partner organizations that will be involved in the implementation of the program; and

- 4) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)-related documents as outlined in Section D.10. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

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

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2024

Approximate Total Funding: \$7,221,000, pending the availability of funds

Approximate Number of Awards: 12

Approximate Average Award: \$400,000 - \$550,000, pending the availability of funds.

Note that proposals for all geographic regions that include a minimum of four countries will be considered for projects of a larger participant scope and a funding level of approximately \$500,000, and up to, but not exceeding \$750,000. Awards in the \$400,000 - \$500,000 range should support approximately 20-30 non-U.S. participants and 8-12 U.S. participants.

Minimum "Floor" of Award: \$400,000, pending the availability of funds

Maximum "Ceiling" of Award: \$750,000, pending the availability of funds

Anticipated Award Date: September 1, 2024, pending the availability of funds

Anticipated Project Completion Date: March 31, 2027

Additional Information: Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew these cooperative agreements for two additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing them again.

The Department reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Additionally, the Department reserves the right to modify the final list of participating countries and regions, and the scope of any resulting cooperative agreement, including in any of the subsequent solicitations.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

C.1. Eligible Applicants

U.S. public and private academic and cultural institutions, exchange-of-persons, and other not-for-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 non-profit status with the IRS at the time of application. Please see the PSI for additional information.

C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements

The following additional eligibility requirements apply to this NOFO announcement:

- a. ECA's grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in ECA funding. ECA anticipates each award to be in an amount over \$130,000 to support all 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. All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, POGI (if applicable), and the PSI; non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.
- c. In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3. & D.5. below for more information.
- d. Only one proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will only consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the PSI document.

C.3. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds

There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this competition. However, ECA 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

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

D.1. Solicitation Package Location

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the ECA website at <https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov>.

D.2. Content and Form of Submission

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which consists of required application forms and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. The application should be submitted per the instructions below at Section D.17. entitled, "Application Deadline and Method of Submission."

D.3. Unique Entity Identifier Number

All organizations are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. ***Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required for federal assistance applications. A UEI is issued as part of the required SAM.gov registration below in section D.5.***

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

D.4. Required Proposal Elements

All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative, budget, and a budget narrative.

D.5. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM)

All organizations 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. **Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.** Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

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.

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>

Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.

D.6. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov (formerly, FAPIIS)

- a. The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);
- b. An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. Currently, federal agencies create integrity records in the integrity module of the Contractor Performance Assessment and Reporting System (CPARS) and these records are visible as responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov;
- c. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, 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 §200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

D.7. 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.8. Adherence To All Regulations Governing the J Visa

ECA places critically important emphasis 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.

ECA will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms for 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 Private Sector Exchange Designation
U.S. Department of State
SA-5, Floor C2, Room C2L13
2200 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20522

D.9. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) and Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to ECA's authorizing legislation, "diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, geographic location, education, income, socio-economic status, and other diversity dimensions, that may hinder inclusion. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. 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. Please refer to the "Support of DEIA" review criterion of this document for more information on how this will be reviewed as a part of any application. Please also refer to the "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility" section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating DEIA into the 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," ECA "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.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Distinct from grants or cooperative agreement monitoring and participant monitoring, performance monitoring is designed to assess progress against a program's goals and objectives. A performance monitoring framework is vital to tracking the direction, pace, and magnitude of change that result from ECA programs.

ECA created the Monitoring Data for ECA (MODE) Framework to measure the performance of ECA programs. **The MODE Framework provides standard indicators and corresponding survey questions to ensure consistent measures across all ECA programs.** More resources and guidance documents on the MODE Framework are available online at:

<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>.

For this proposal, ECA requires the applicant include the MODE Framework objectives and indicators listed below (note that, because not all MODE objectives and indicators are relevant for a program, the numbering below will not be sequential). In addition to the ECA-required

objectives and indicators, applicants may also select additional MODE Framework indicators (see the Indicator Book on the MODE Framework website), or design custom objectives and indicators that are specific to the proposed program and this proposal.

- Demographic Questions as outlined in the Indicator Book on page vi, and Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) (<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>)
- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
 - o Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities.
 - E1.1.01: Percent of participants reporting that their program experience offered opportunities to engage with other cultures
 - E1.1.04: Percent of participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government (core indicator)
 - E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator)
 - E1.1.10: Percent of foreign participants who traveled to the United States for the first time during their program (core indicator)
 - E1.1.12: Percent of foreign participants indicating a change in understanding of third-party countries' cultures and values
 - E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American people (core indicator)
 - E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator)
 - E1.1.19: Percent of participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries.
 - E2.0.01: Percent of foreign participants that volunteer in their host communities
 - E2.0.04: Number of hours that foreign participants spend volunteering in their host communities
 - o Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster participants' belief that civic engagement benefits communities/countries
 - E2.2.01: Percent of participants who have more confidence in their ability to have an impact in their home country (core indicator)
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
 - E3.0.02: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of Americans (core indicator)

- E3.0.04: Percent of foreign participants who report increasing their network of third country nationals
 - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)
 - o Sub-Objective 3.1: Alumni subscribe to platforms for resources and information-sharing
 - E3.1.02: Percent of participants who learned about new resources
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries
 - E4.0.01: Percent of participants reporting increases in their job skills as a result of their program participation
 - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation
 - E4.0.05: Percent of participants who report an increase in technical skills as a result of their program participation
 - o Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
 - E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
 - E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts (core indicator)
 - E4.1.04: Number of professional placements
 - E4.1.11: Number of American reciprocal exchange participants
 - o Sub-Objective 4.2: Increase ability of participants to recognize and counter disinformation
 - E4.2.01: Percent of participants that report increased ability to counter disinformation (ICFJ only)
- Objective 6: Increase Capacity of ECA partner institutions to achieve program strategic goals
 - o Sub-Objective 6.1: Increase capacity of implementing partners and educational institutions for the internationalization of programs
 - E6.1.02: Number of exchange participants from or hosted by Minority-Serving Institutions participating in ECA (both funded and private sector) exchanges (core indicator)
- Objective 8: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau's resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships
 - E8.0.03: Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

Performance Monitoring Plans (PMPs)

ECA recommends the use of a PMP to serve as the primary reference document for performance monitoring for this award. If used, the PMP is an important part of any proposal, as it outlines how the applicant plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals

and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions. A PMP document that includes all MODE Framework indicators is a part of this solicitation's attachments. Specific instructions on how to modify the PMP to be responsive to this solicitation are included in that document. While ECA recommends the applicant use the PMP format provided, this is not a requirement. If a PMP is not included in the proposal, applicants should provide similar information to that found in the suggested PMP format, in a presentation of your choice. A training on how to complete a PMP is available here: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>. Successful PMPs (or similar documentation) should include the following:

- **Objectives.** Programmatic objectives are statements of the condition(s) that state what the program is designed to achieve. Objectives are therefore bound by the resources and timeframe of the program and must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART; see the ECA Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Innovation (MELI) Unit's pages on the ECA website for more information: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-evaluation-division/capacity-building>). In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the MODE Framework, the Functional Bureau Strategy (<https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau>), or other applicant-designed program-specific objectives.
- **Indicators.** Performance indicators are measures used to gauge progress toward programmatic objectives and sub-objectives. Indicators should be as specific as possible (following the SMART principles) and include any proposed disaggregations (meaning, breakdowns of the data by subgroups, such as gender or country; the PMP lists the demographic questions required to obtain the information necessary to report the disaggregations). Each indicator should also include a target number to be achieved. A target is a planned level of result to be achieved within an explicit timeframe.
 - If you do not use the PMP format provided, note that any performance monitoring reference document the applicant submits should include the information in the column headers (Indicator Name, Definition, Target, Survey Question, etc.) in the PMP attachment at a minimum.
 - In addition to those indicators outlined in above, the applicant may propose additional custom, program-specific indicators in the PMP (ECA recommends the proposed PMPs include a minimum of one indicator for each custom programmatic objective).
 - During the period of performance of the award, the ECA program office may further revise, add, or remove indicators. Therefore, the applicant's PMP and data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established.

Award recipients are responsible for collecting indicator data only on participant outcomes

during the period of performance of the award itself (see the PMP for guidelines as to when these data collection efforts should occur). ECA will measure outcomes of ECA participants at one, three, five, and 10 years after the exchange has ended to capture the long-term impact of ECA programming unless otherwise specified in the NOFO and/or POGI. In this instance, the recipient will be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to de-duplicate questions and minimize potential survey fatigue.

Award recipients will be required to submit an upload of the raw data (in CSV format) along with the State Assistance Management System Domestic (SAMS-D RPM) reporting (see below). Regardless of the survey platform used, **all** MODE Framework survey questions outlined above are **required** (i.e., should be forced response); please see the Consent Language in the MODE Framework Indicator Book for more information on how to convey this to participants/survey respondents.

Program Performance M&E Narrative

The applicant should include information within the program narrative section(s) of the proposal that outlines how the applicant intends to measure the indicators listed above. This will be separate from the PMP and should include but not be limited to:

- An overview of resources available to the applicant that outline the team structure and responsibilities surrounding performance monitoring.
- The mechanism(s) through which surveys and other data collection tools (if applicable) will be administered, including which platform will be used, and when and how surveys will be advertised to participants – detailing strategies to ensure adequate survey response rates (https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/eca_eval_division_survey_response_rates.pdf), and to reduce selection and non-response bias.
- A brief explanation of data analysis and reporting procedures.
- An overview of a proposed learning plan and feedback loops to ensure that the Grant Officer (GO)/Grant Officer Representative (GOR) are informed on performance monitoring issues at regular intervals.

SAMS-D RPM Reporting Requirements

The SAMS-D is a database solution that serves as the official system of record for all U.S. Department of State and ECA awards. The Results Performance Monitoring (RPM) module within SAMS-D is an extension module that enables users to report performance monitoring data in the same system where they currently manage federal assistance actions. As part of ECA's efforts to streamline data collection and management, the recipient(s) of this award will be required to input performance reporting data outlined in this solicitation into the SAMS-D RPM. The data stored in the SAMS-D RPM will provide ECA with a bureau-wide, uniform M&E

reporting tool that is already linked with other elements of the awards familiar to existing awardees.

D.11. Virtual Exchange Component

When changing political, health, environmental, or other similar circumstances require a suspension or halt of in-person activities and where ECA determines that a virtual alternative is appropriate and viable, award recipients should demonstrate the ability and capacity to transition from in-person to virtual exchanges. Proposals should demonstrate the organization's capacity to provide innovative options for virtual activities to substitute for in-person engagement for program participants. Organizations should consider how they will implement virtual exchange activities, given the potential limits to internet access from participants in some locations and while continuing to advance foreign policy objectives and achieve lasting benefits for U.S. citizens and international participants.

In addition to planning for virtual exchange activities if in-person programming is prohibited, ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA 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) 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. 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.12. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients

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

D. 13. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial

ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as "America250" – a truly global celebration. As the period of performance for this award is scheduled to cover part or all of calendar year (CY) 2026, the applicant may wish to consider ways the program can celebrate America250. Any America250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided America250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

D.14. 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, a detailed budget, and a budget narrative. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

For additional budget guidelines and formatting instructions, please refer to the PSI.

D.15. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

Travel: International and domestic airfare; airline baggage and seat fees; visas; transit costs; and ground transportation costs. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act. There is no charge for J-1 visas for participants in ECA-sponsored exchange programs. Award recipient staff travel should NOT be included in the exchange participant numbers.

Per Diem: For U.S.-based programming, organizations should use the published Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>. ECA requests applicants to budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed Federal per diem rates. Foreign per diem rates can be accessed at: https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp

Book and Cultural Allowances: Participants are entitled to a one-time cultural allowance of \$150 per person, plus a book allowance of \$50.

Consultants: Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Honoraria rates should not exceed \$250 per day per session. Organizations are encouraged to cost-share rates that would exceed that figure. Subaward recipient organizations may also be employed, in which case the written agreement between the prospective award recipient and subaward recipient should be included in the proposal. Such subawards should detail the division of responsibilities and proposed costs, and subcontracts should be itemized in the budget. Contractors/contracting organizations may also be employed in which case the written agreement between the award recipient and the contractors/contracting organizations should be included in the proposal.

Room Rental: The rental of meeting space should not exceed \$250 per day per activity. Any rates that exceed this amount should be cost shared.

Materials: Proposals may contain costs to purchase, develop, and translate materials for Fellows. Costs for high quality translation of materials should be anticipated and included in the budget.

Working Meal: One working meal may be provided during each U.S.-based and foreign-based component. Per capita costs for working meals may not exceed \$45/person, excluding room rental and other overhead charges. The number of invited guests may not exceed Fellows by more than a factor of two-to-one. Inviting speakers to stay for lunch does not constitute a working meal.

Return Travel Allowance: A return travel allowance of \$70 for each non-U.S. participant may be included in the budget. This allowance would cover incidental expenses incurred during international travel.

Re-Entry Seminars: Costs related to providing non-U.S. Fellows a re-entry seminar may include per diem, hotel accommodations, material development, and other related expenses.

Health and Travel Insurance: The award recipient will be responsible for enrolling both non-U.S. and U.S. Fellows in the ECA-sponsored Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). The premium is paid by ECA and should not be included in the proposal budget. Applicants may include costs for travel insurance for both non-U.S. and U.S. Fellows in the budget.

Wire Transfer Fees: When necessary, applicants may include costs to transfer funds to foreign-based partner organizations. Award recipients are urged to research applicable taxes that may be imposed on these transfers by host governments.

In-Country Travel Costs for Visa Processing Purposes: Visas for non-U.S. Fellows are provided by the U.S. Department of State and costs should not be included in the budget. Given the requirements associated with obtaining J-1 visas for ECA-supported participants, applicants should include costs for any travel associated with procuring visas, including travel for interviews, delivering or picking up passports, etc.

Staff Salaries and Benefits: Costs necessary for the effective administration of the program may include salaries for employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI).

Reasonable Accommodations: Award recipients should budget for the reasonable accommodation of individuals with disabilities. Proposals may allocate up to 5-7 percent of the total requested ECA award amount for this purpose and reflect plans to make the necessary program modifications or participant number adjustment should these funds be used for reasonable accommodations.

Professional Fellows Congress: Allowable costs associated with the Professional Fellows Congress in Washington, DC include:

1. Travel to/from Washington, DC: Domestic travel to Washington, DC for the Congress, including ground transportation to and from the airport to the conference hotel. Non-U.S. Fellows fly back to their respective home country directly from the Washington, DC area at the conclusion of the Professional Fellows Congress.
2. Non-Congress related activities: ECA encourages award recipients to incorporate additional programmatic time in the Washington, DC area (before or after the Congress), using the opportunity to arrange meetings with government agencies, national organizations, and other key stakeholders. Costs for ground transportation, lodging, meals, and miscellaneous expenses for all additional days/nights in the Washington, DC area should be included in individual proposal budgets.

Note: Food and lodging for non-U.S. Fellows and award recipient staff (limited to two staff per organization) attending the Congress will be covered by the Congress award recipient under a separate award and should NOT be included in individual proposal budgets for this competition.

Alumni Activities: Reasonable costs related to alumni activities may be included. Award recipients can propose small grants or a small grant competition for the non-U.S. Fellows to compete to encourage their continued work on their individual projects.

Organizational meeting in Washington, DC: An organizational meeting for award recipients of the Professional Fellows Program may be held virtually or in-person in Washington, DC, on a mutually agreed upon date. If in-person in Washington, DC, the meeting would be approximately two days in length. Award recipients who would need to travel to Washington, DC for this meeting should budget for approximately two-days of travel, lodging, meals, incidental expenses, etc.

COVID-related expenses: COVID-related expenses, if any, that are deemed necessary for implementing the two-way exchange program should be described in detail in order to receive consideration.

D.16. 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.17. Application Deadline and Method of Submission

Application Deadline Date: Friday, April 5, 2024

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.18. 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>).

D.18.a. 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>

D.18.b. 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>

D.18.c. 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

D.18.d. Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

Applicants have until 11:59 p.m., Washington, DC time on 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 found 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 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.19. Intergovernmental Review of Applications

Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1. Review Process

ECA will check that all proposals meet the technical requirements in this solicitation. Proposals that do not meet the guidelines, including those under the eligibility section above or in the PSI, will be ineligible for further review.

All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office before being reviewed by an ECA proposal review panel and may be reviewed by Public Diplomacy Sections overseas, State Department regional bureaus, or other State Department offices, as appropriate. All reviewers, including the ECA grant panels will review any eligible proposals based on the criteria below. Recommended proposals will be reviewed for compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and assessed for risk. Final funding decisions are made by the U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Only an ECA Grant Officer has the final authority to issue assistance awards.

E.2. Review Criteria

An ECA proposal review panel will competitively evaluate all technically eligible applications according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation.

- 1. Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, direct linkage to the goals of the PFP, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Proposals should demonstrate a realistic and achievable scope that fits within the budgetary and time parameters set forth in this NOFO. Proposals that plan for securing one Fellowship placement for each non-U.S. Fellow during the U.S. Program, rather than multiple, short-term placements with different U.S. organizations, will be deemed more competitive under this review criterion. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how program objectives and key program elements will be achieved through programmatic activities.
- 2. Support of DEIA:** Proposals should show how the program and your institution supports ECA's policy on diversity. Proposals should have a clear DEIA plan that is integrated into all aspects of program administration, design, content, and implementation. Proposals should demonstrate how DEIA will enhance the program's goals, objectives, and the participants'

exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated DEIA plan and not simply express general support for the concept of DEIA. Applicants should refer to the Bureau's "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Statement" in the PSI.

3. Institutional Capacity and Track Record: Proposals should include the necessary personnel and institutional resources to achieve the program results. Proposals should include (1) the institution's mission and date of establishment; (2) detailed information about proposed partners including a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities; (3) an outline of prior awards, or U.S. government and/or private support received, for similar programs; and (4) descriptions and resumes of key staff who will implement the program. The proposal should reflect the institution's expertise in the subject area and an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past ECA awards. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

4. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): Proposals should have a fully developed M&E plan that includes goals, objectives, and indicators. The plan should be feasible and aligned with the M&E section of this solicitation. Proposals should include a realistic learning plan that outlines how your organization plans to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices. All submitted M&E plans will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided at least the required information outlined in the M&E section of this solicitation and demonstrated the applicant's capacity to carry out the M&E plan.

5. Cost-effectiveness and Cost-sharing: The applicant should demonstrate efficient use of Bureau funds. Applicants should keep overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-share 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 ECA procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the ECA's Grants Division. 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

Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply.

Terms and Conditions applicable to all ECA agreements include:

- 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.
- U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions.

For a copy of the OMB Guidance cited, please download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

For a copy of the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, or to review other Department of State assistance information, please download from:

<https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>

F.3. Region and Topic Specific requirements

The following additional requirements apply to this project:

F.3.a. Prohibition on the use of Federal Funds to Promote, Support, or advocate for the legalization or practice of Prostitution

The U.S. Government is opposed to prostitution and related activities, which are inherently harmful and dehumanizing, and contribute to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. None of the funds made available under this agreement may be used to promote, support, or advocate for the legalization or practice of prostitution. Nothing in the preceding sentence shall be construed to preclude assistance designed to ameliorate the suffering of, or health risks to, victims while they are being trafficked or after they are out of the situation that resulted from such victims being trafficked.

The recipient shall insert the foregoing provision in all sub-agreements under this award.

This provision includes express terms and conditions of the agreement and any violation of it shall be grounds for unilateral termination of the agreement by the Department of State prior to the end of its term.

F.3.b. 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 Chris Warnke at WarnkeCJ@state.gov for additional information.

F.4. Reporting Requirements

Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted. All reports must be submitted in a timely manner. For planning purposes, applicants can expect to provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

- 1.) Performance Progress Reports (PPRs) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual reports shall be due 120 calendar days after the cooperative agreement 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 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to ECA in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) information.)

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to ECA 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 ECA 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 workdays prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Tania Jazyuka, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Citizen Exchanges, Global Leaders Division, ECA/PE/C/GL, SA-5, 3rd Floor, 2200 C Street N.W., Washington, DC 20037, JazyukaT@state.gov.

All correspondence with ECA 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, ECA 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 ECA representative. Explanatory information provided by ECA that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. ECA 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.

Rebecca Pasini
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange
U.S. Department of State

February 5, 2024