



Educational and Cultural Affairs

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

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Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2025 Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

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Deadline for Applications: June 3, 2024

Executive Summary: The U.S. Study Abroad Branch (ECA/A/S/Q) in the Office of Global Educational Programs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), U.S. Department of State, is pleased to announce an open competition for proposals to administer the FY 2025 Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program. The CLS Program is a component of the U.S. Department of State's effort to increase the number of Americans who learn critical foreign languages in support of the U.S. foreign policy goals of bolstering national security; promoting U.S. competitiveness and economic prosperity; and building mutual understanding with critical regions of the world. The CLS Program started in 2006 as part of the interagency National Security Language Initiative. The award will fund approximately 522 U.S. undergraduate and graduate students to study critical languages through intensive overseas language institutes organized on behalf of ECA, in countries and locations where the target languages are widely spoken and through virtual programming. The award supports programming for all CLS alumni since the program's inception in 2006.

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.

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 CLS Program is designed to increase the number of Americans who learn critical foreign languages in support of the U.S. foreign policy goals of increasing national security and promoting economic competitiveness. Global competencies for Americans, especially foreign language skills, are essential in engaging and understanding foreign societies, governments and peoples, especially in critical world regions, in order to promote cooperation, solve complex multi-national issues, and advance American interests. The ability of Americans to succeed individually and collectively in a global economy is enhanced through their understanding of critical languages and cultures across the globe. The CLS Program accelerates and advances participants' language skills through in-person overseas immersive institutes and CLS virtual programming which provide participants with a combination of structured classroom language instruction and less formal interactive and applied learning opportunities. For additional information, please visit <https://exchanges.state.gov/us/cls>.

Goals of the CLS Program:

- To develop a diverse cadre of Americans with advanced linguistic skills and related cultural understanding who are able to advance international dialogue, bolster national security, contribute to U.S. economic prosperity, and build mutual understanding; and
- To improve the ability of Americans to engage with the people of other countries in the language of the host country.

In order to achieve these goals, ECA plans to support programs for U.S. undergraduate and graduate students to gain and improve foreign language proficiency and related cultural competency skills in critical languages.

Expected Program Outcomes:

- 1) Participants will demonstrate an increase in language proficiency (oral comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing), as verified through a standardized language assessment tool for oral proficiency.
- 2) Participants will demonstrate a deeper understanding of the host country's society, institutions, and culture.
- 3) Participants will share American culture with their overseas peers and members of the host community.
- 4) Alumni will continue their language learning, apply their linguistic skills in their academic, career, and volunteer activities, and/or participate in other exchanges and educational activities to further their language learning and application.

- 5) Alumni will share their CLS experiences with others in their home educational institutions and communities.

A.3. Program Specific Guidelines

The CLS Program is a component of the U.S. Department of State's effort to increase the number of Americans who learn critical foreign languages in support of the U.S. foreign policy goals of bolstering national security; promoting U.S. competitiveness and economic prosperity; and building mutual understanding with critical regions of the world.

The award will fund approximately 522 U.S. undergraduate and graduate students to study critical languages through intensive overseas language institutes and virtual programming. Approximately 402 U.S. undergraduate and graduate students will study a critical language during the summer of 2025 at CLS institutes located in countries and locations where the target languages are widely spoken. Anticipated languages for this component include Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu. Approximately 120 U.S. undergraduate students will study a critical language during the summer of 2025 virtually through a CLS host institute/partner located outside of the United States. Anticipated languages for CLS virtual institutes include Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, Korean, and Russian. The award supports programming for all CLS alumni since the program's inception in 2006, which is approximately 8,500 alumni to date.

All languages and corresponding language levels, institute partners, and locations shall be approved by ECA annually. ECA reserves the right to change, expand, or eliminate eligible countries, locations, languages, CLS institutes, total number of proposed participants or by language or component, and/or other elements of the program's design for CLS institutes and virtual programs, including new and/or revised elements to respond to current foreign policy priorities as determined by ECA. ECA reserves the right due to unforeseen circumstances to transition overseas CLS institutes to virtual programming, if needed to ensure the health and safety of the participants, the integrity of the program, or for other reasons.

U.S. public and private non-profit organizations, including U.S. higher educational institutions, or consortia of such organizations, meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3), may submit proposals to cooperate with ECA in the administration and implementation of the CLS Program, according to the guidance provided in this solicitation. U.S. applicant organizations or consortia must exhibit the necessary expertise and capacity to implement the program either through their own offices or partner institutions. Organizations may demonstrate their direct expertise, or they may partner with other organizations to best respond to the requirements outlined in this solicitation. Organizations should clearly outline all duties and responsibilities of any partner or implementing organization(s). Consortia submitting proposals must designate a lead organization (primary recipient) to receive the

award. The lead organization must submit a signed and dated consortium agreement (or letter of intent) with the proposal.

Pending the availability of FY 2025 funds, it is anticipated that the total amount of funding available for the administrative components and the implementation of the CLS Program will be \$8,990,000.

Applicants may submit a proposal to conduct the following:

Administrative Components and Implementation of Overseas Institutes and Virtual Program

Maximum Funding: \$8,990,000, pending the availability of FY 2025 funds.

Submit one proposal to implement the following:

- a) Administrative components including: recruitment, outreach and program promotion of the CLS Program; application, selection, and notification of all CLS participants; and programming and tracking for all CLS alumni.
- b) Implementation of overseas CLS institutes and CLS virtual programming for approximately 522 participants as described in this solicitation. Applicants are encouraged to maximize the number of proposed participants supported under this award.

Organizations or consortia applying for this award must demonstrate their capacity for the following areas: (1) provision of foreign language instructional programs for U.S. college and university students; (2) successful implementation of overseas and virtual language immersion programs, including cultural enrichment activities; (3) experience in conducting programs in the proposed host country or countries, or equivalent experience, and (4) capacity to effectively administer a national open merit-based competition.

Applicants may submit **only one** proposal under this competition. 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.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE COMPONENTS

The award recipient will be responsible for managing the administrative components of the CLS Program comprising the following key areas of responsibility: Recruitment, Outreach, and Program Promotion; Application, Selection, and Notification of Participants; and Alumni Programming and Tracking. The award recipient will also be responsible for program planning and management and financial oversight and reporting as it relates to the award.

a. Recruitment, Outreach, and Program Promotion

Recruitment and Outreach Plan: Propose a comprehensive plan to publicize the CLS Program (overseas institutes and virtual programming) broadly and to recruit a strong pool of qualified candidates from U.S. colleges and universities nationwide that represent the diversity of the United States. The definition of diversity includes, but is not limited to, ethnicity, race, gender, disabilities, socio-economic status, geographic location, and educational institution. The proposal should address and encourage the participation of traditionally underserved audiences and those who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to study language abroad.

The proposal should describe how the CLS Program will be publicized to potential student applicants, to U.S. colleges and universities and other relevant organizations, and to the general public. The proposed recruitment and outreach plan should include print and online promotional materials; mail and email notifications; a social media plan; and outreach to CLS campus advisors; and should consider in-person and/or virtual campus visits and presentations; conference participation (presentations and exhibits); and other in-person or online recruitment activities. The recruitment plan will be subject to ongoing coordination and approval by ECA. ECA may request that the award recipient collaborate with other ECA-sponsored programs on some outreach activities, which may include but are not limited to, conference participation and campus visits.

Print and Electronic Materials: Ensure that all print and electronic materials (online application, websites, digital resources, brochures, press releases, announcements, etc.) developed for promotional purposes and related to the program comply with [ECA's Communications Guidance](#). The award recipient must ensure that ECA and the U.S. Department of State are prominently identified as the program sponsor in all publicity and other scholarship program materials. All recruitment materials must prioritize the U.S. Department of State and the CLS Program branding identities, which should predominate in the materials. The award recipient must use the U.S. Department of State seal, the U.S. flag, and the CLS logo on all materials related to the program as delineated in ECA's Communications Guidance, but should the guidance change, the award recipient must comply with relevant and current guidance. All CLS-related print and electronic materials must be submitted to ECA for approval in advance of publication and distribution. ECA retains copyright use of materials and will determine how and where to distribute materials related to this program.

Publicity: On a regular and timely basis, provide ECA with innovative ideas on how to publicize the CLS Program, which may include, but is not limited to, participant and alumni highlights, photos, videos, and press coverage. Work closely with ECA to publicize the achievements of CLS participants. Inform ECA of any publicity that highlights the CLS Program or CLS participants, or otherwise strengthens outreach efforts, particularly those that involve government officials and the media. When the media interacts with CLS participants or alumni, the award recipient should make every effort to identify CLS as a U.S. Department of State-

sponsored program, unless otherwise advised by ECA or the Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) of a U.S. Embassy/Consulate.

CLS Digital Presence: Develop and maintain a dedicated and dynamic CLS Program website that is mobile responsive. The CLS website should include comprehensive information about the CLS Program, including information on the CLS overseas institutes and virtual programming; application information and frequently asked questions; lists of past CLS participants by institution, unless a participant elects to opt out; resources for CLS campus advisors; program highlights; impact stories and data; and alumni resources.

Maintain an active and engaging presence on social media accounts for recruitment, program promotion, and sharing program impacts. Provide ECA with analytics for all CLS digital properties and full administrative access to the CLS digital properties, including usernames and passwords. Work closely with ECA to highlight and amplify program impacts and outcomes on social media.

CLS Campus Advisors: Engage with faculty and staff at colleges and universities across the United States for the recruitment and advising of CLS applicants. Maintain and develop a diverse network of CLS campus advisors. Devise an online mechanism for sharing the names of CLS applicants with the appropriate campus advisor(s) at key points in the application and selection process, including, but not limited to, when an application is started. The list of CLS campus advisors should be made available to ECA staff upon request and posted on the public CLS Program website to enable students to locate their campus advisors. When registering to serve as a CLS campus advisor, individuals should be permitted to opt out of being listed on the public website. Provide online resources and toolkits to CLS advisors to support CLS applicants and alumni. Engage the CLS advisor network in training activities and contribute ideas for activities (virtual or in-person) that support and develop the CLS campus advisor network. Proposals that describe innovative ideas for campus engagement, particularly in the development of a robust and diverse CLS campus advisor corps, are encouraged.

b. Application, Selection, and Notification

Application: Establish, maintain, and update an application for the entire CLS Program (overseas institutes and virtual programs) and an online application system to collect, store, and process data in support of program application and selection cycles. An alternate paper-based application should also be provided for candidates unable to apply online. These paper-based applications, however, must be entered into the online system by the award recipient's program staff. Respond to and manage all general inquiries and application questions. Record and track all inquiries related to problems or issues with any part of the application process.

Eligibility Criteria: Ensure that the following minimum criteria are used to recruit CLS applicants: U.S. citizenship; 18 years of age prior to the start of their program or scholarship

(the award recipient may select a cut-off date in consultation with ECA); enrolled in an accredited U.S. degree-granting program at the undergraduate (associate's, bachelor's) or graduate (master's, doctoral, professional degree) level at the time of application; and completed at least one year academic year of study prior to participating in the CLS Program. ECA reserves the right to amend the eligibility requirements and will provide additional eligibility requirements to the recipient organization.

Review and Selection: Conduct a nationwide merit-based competition for U.S. undergraduate and graduate students with clearly defined criteria and a formal selection process. ECA will approve the overall selection plan and specific selection criteria. A general statement about the selection criteria should be included in the promotional materials.

At a minimum, successful applications should demonstrate the following:

- Professional and academic goals linked to the study of the language and/or the region in which it is spoken;
- Strong motivation to learn the target language and a plan to continue study of the target language;
- Contribution to CLS goals of increasing and diversifying the number of Americans who study and speak critical languages in order to develop mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people of other countries;
- Language skills of the appropriate level for the target language, as detailed in this solicitation;
- Evidence of ability to succeed in an intensive group-based language study program and personal qualities associated with successful cohort-based exchange participants, such as flexibility, adaptability, resilience, open-mindedness, and respect for other peoples and culture; and
- Articulate barriers they have encountered to study a critical language and how participation in the CLS Program will help them overcome those barriers (virtual programming only).

Selected students should represent diversity of institutional type and fields of study, a balance between genders, and a balance between undergraduate and graduate students, to the extent possible. Special attention should be paid to ensure geographic diversity and, to the extent possible, that selected participants represent all U.S. states and territories. All other factors being equal, preference should be given to candidates who have not had extensive recent experience abroad. Duty abroad in the Armed Forces of the United States is not considered experience abroad for the purposes of this program. All other factors being equal, veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces must be given preference in selection, and this preference takes precedence over all other preferences.

The award recipient must plan and submit to ECA for approval a transparent, merit-based selection process with clearly identified criteria and a scoring matrix for assessing the CLS applications. Applications must also be designed to elicit information for CLS applicants that

are relevant to the selection process. Suggested revisions and additions to these preferences may be made in consultation with ECA.

Selection Panels: The award recipient should convene selection panels to review applications and rank the candidates for final approval by ECA. All selection panels should be conducted virtually. Selection panels should include representatives of a variety of types and locations of U.S. educational institutions. Panelists should include staff and faculty associated with study abroad, fellowships, and regional or language studies, and may be selected from the ranks of CLS campus advisors or may be new to the CLS Program. The partner should ensure that panelist are not reviewing candidates from their own organization during the selection panel process.

U.S. Department of State Approval: Present the final recommended participants and alternates to ECA for approval, providing an overall analysis of the results of the selection panels, including the number of participants by language, host country, home state, institution type, level of study (undergraduate or graduate) and other categories as requested by ECA.

Applicant Notification: Notify CLS applicants of their selection status using ECA-approved notification letters. Applicants for the CLS summer institutes should be notified in time to secure necessary visas before summer overseas programs begin. Manage the acceptance process, advancing alternates to replace declinations on a timely basis and with ECA approval. Additional deliverables and requirements related to the application, selection, and notification process include, but are not limited to, the items listed below:

- Conduct a technical review of applications for eligibility and completeness.
- Develop and implement best practices and training for program staff who work on the proposed selection process. These best practices and trainings should aim to ensure consistency and standardization, including but not limited to, through explanatory language, materials, and/or presentations.
- Develop a mechanism to evaluate the application and selection process and share analyses, results, and any suggested changes to recruitment and selection with ECA.

c. Alumni Programming and Tracking

Alumni Programming Plan: Propose innovative ideas for in-person and/or virtual alumni follow-on activities and programming for CLS alumni of all program years. Alumni activities and programming should aim to connect alumni to one another, build a CLS alumni identity, and reinforce the knowledge and skills alumni acquired on the CLS Program. Alumni activities and programming may also support alumni in applying their language skills and other skills gained on the CLS program to future careers. Applicants should include a virtual or in/person alumni

activity that highlights one or more U.S. foreign policy and/or national security goals. The proposed plan should also facilitate the involvement of CLS alumni in supporting the current and future program through recruitment, publicity, and outreach. Alumni programming and activities will be subject to ongoing coordination and approval by ECA.

Re-entry orientation: Develop a plan for conducting virtual re-entry orientation session(s) for recent CLS alumni. Re-entry orientation session(s) should include connecting the CLS experience to career goals; opportunities for further language learning; building alumni networks; sharing the CLS experience; non-competitive eligibility for federal employment; internships and careers that utilize language skills and promoting the CLS Program and U.S. study abroad programs. Develop and update annually an online resource document that covers topics from the re-entry orientation and ensure that it is available to all CLS alumni.

Certificates: Provide CLS alumni who have successfully completed the program and all requirements with appropriate certificates for program completion, language proficiency test results, and non-competitive eligibility for federal employment conferred by Executive Order 13750.

CLS Alumni Ambassadors: Conduct an annual competition among recent CLS alumni to select CLS Alumni Ambassadors. Provide training and support for Alumni Ambassadors to assist in program promotion, outreach, networking, and other proposed activities decided in consultation with ECA.

Tracking Alumni: Create and maintain a database to track alumni from all CLS program years, integrating existing alumni data. Conduct at least one survey of all CLS alumni to help assess long-term program during the three-year award period. All records and data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and be provided to ECA. Secure and protect all Personally Identifiable Information (PII). The FY 2025 award recipient should be prepared to work with ECA and the current award recipient on building an alumni database.

CLS Alumni Directory: Maintain a *CLS Alumni Directory* on the public CLS Program website. The public database should be searchable and include the name of the participant, year of study, language of study, study abroad destination, education level (undergraduate or graduate student) and their U.S. college or university. CLS participants should have the option to “opt out” of the public database on their application. The FY 2025 award recipient should be prepared to work with ECA and the current award recipient on transferring alumni data.

Digital Badging: Manage CLS alumni digital badging. The FY 2025 award recipient should be prepared to work with ECA and the current award recipient on transferring digital badging account information.

International Exchange Alumni Engagement: Encourage alumni to register on the U.S. Department of State's International Exchange Alumni website (<https://alumni.state.gov/>); and submit participant and/or alumni data to allow for direct messaging from ECA regarding bureau-wide alumni opportunities. Facilitate interactions and cooperation between CLS alumni and alumni of other U.S. Department of State-sponsored programs. Encourage linkages to other federally sponsored language programs to share resources, pursue common goals, and inspire CLS alumni to pursue language mastery.

Non-Competitive Eligibility: Maintain close coordination with ECA on operationalizing Executive Order 13750, which grants alumni of the CLS Program Non-Competitive Eligibility (NCE) for federal hiring, including issuance of ECA-provided certificates to all program alumni who have successfully completed their program. Ensure that applicants, participants, and alumni are aware of the benefits of NCE. Periodically share NCE job opportunities provided by the Department of State and/or other USG entities with CLS alumni.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF OVERSEAS INSTITUTES

In FY 2025, the CLS Program anticipates supporting approximately 402 students at CLS overseas institutes located outside the United States. CLS overseas institutes provide intensive language instruction in a classroom setting, as well as immersion in the cultural, social, and educational life of the host country/location for eight to ten weeks over the summer. In addition, CLS overseas institutes should provide participants with extra interventions to ensure maximum language acquisition and a greater understanding of the culture of the host location during the duration of the program. These interventions include living-learning housing, language partners, cultural and thematic programming, and a language policy.

ECA anticipates that award recipient will identify qualified overseas partner organizations as sub-recipients to directly implement most or all of the overseas language institutes. The applicant may propose to directly implement some institutes or specific components of one or more language institutes. The applicant must work with proposed overseas implementing organizations to design, plan, and implement CLS institutes focused on language acquisition and cultural immersion. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all CLS overseas institutes maintain program standards and meet all program requirements.

For FY 2025, CLS anticipates supporting the following regions and participants per languages for CLS overseas institutes. Applicants are encouraged to maximize the number of proposed participants supported under this award:

Near East and North Africa Region – Arabic Institutes

Arabic Language Institute(s):

- Participants: Approximately 60 participants.
- Language Levels: Advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for countries/locations in North Africa, the Middle East, or the Gulf region, with the exception of Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, Syria, and Yemen.

Note: Classroom instruction should emphasize Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and dialect and should approach Arabic as a continuum in which certain situations require MSA while others require dialect.

East Asia and Pacific Region – Chinese (Mandarin), Indonesian, Japanese, and Korean Institutes

Chinese (Mandarin) Language Institute(s)

- Participants: Approximately 75 participants.
- Language Levels: Advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced.
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Singapore.

Note: Chinese instruction should be in Mandarin only. Teaching materials used in the program should be available in both simplified and traditional character versions. The Hanyu Pinyin Romanization system should be used.

Indonesian Language Institute:

- Participants: Approximately 20 participants.
- Language Levels: Beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced.
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for Indonesia.

Japanese Language Institute:

- Participants: Approximately 25 participants.
- Language Levels: Intermediate and advanced.
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for Japan, in locations other than Tokyo.

Korean Language Institute(s):

- Participants: Approximately 50 participants.
- Language Levels: Advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced.
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for South Korea, in locations other than Seoul.

Europe and Eurasia Region – Russian and Turkish Institutes

Russian Language Institute(s):

- Participants: Approximately 40 participants.
- Language Levels: Advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced.
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Baltic States, or Moldova. Programs should not be proposed for Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

Turkish Language Institute:

- Participants: Approximately 24 participants.
- Language Levels: Beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced.
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for Turkey.

South Central Asia Region – Indic and Persian Institutes

Indic Language Institute(s) – Hindi and Urdu

- Participants: Approximately 38 participants with the following approximate distribution: Hindi – 24 participants; Urdu – 14 participants
- Language Levels: Beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced.
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for India, in locations other than New Delhi and Mumbai.

Persian Language Institute

- Participants: Approximately 22 participants
- Language Levels: Beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced.
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for Tajikistan or another country outside of Iran where Persian is commonly spoken.

Note: Classroom instruction should emphasize Farsi, with some class time devoted to Tajik or other local dialect, particularly at the beginning of the program.

Sub-Saharan Africa Region – Swahili Institute

Swahili Language Institute:

- Participants: Approximately 24 participants.
- Language Levels: Beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced.
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for Kenya and Tanzania.

Western Hemisphere Region – Portuguese Institute

Portuguese Language Institute:

- Participants: Approximately 24 participants.
- Language Levels: Beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced.
- Locations: Programs may be proposed for Brazil.

ECA will select – and reserves the right to make changes to – eligible countries, locations, languages, number of proposed participants by language, program components, or other elements of the program design or implementation, considering any Department of State Travel Advisories and other relevant safety and security concerns, the availability of funding, or other factors determined by ECA. ECA reserves the right to transition one or more overseas institutes to virtual programming if needed to ensure the health and safety of the participants, the integrity of the program, or for other reasons. As part of emergency planning, all applicants must present a plan for transitioning some or all of the proposed CLS language institutes to a virtual format, if deemed necessary by ECA. The final slate of all institute locations and partners is subject to approval by ECA.

a. Overseas Institute Program Design:

Unless otherwise directed by ECA, the overseas CLS Institutes' duration, dates, and size shall be as follows:

- Duration: Each proposed institute should be eight – ten weeks in country, not including the pre-program orientation.
- Dates: Institutes should take place during summer 2025 (late May to mid-August).
- Size: The number of participants proposed per overseas institute must consider the capability of each proposed institute to provide a quality academic program, housing, and support to participants in all aspects of the program, specifically with any safety or health issues that may arise. Each institute should host a maximum of 30 participants, unless otherwise approved by ECA.

Each institute must provide multiple levels of language instruction as described in this solicitation. Language levels offered at an institute may be adjusted with ECA approval.

The applicant must integrate the following components into program design at each overseas CLS institute. All costs for these elements will be covered from the award.

Language Instruction: Formal classroom language instruction should be no less than a total of 15 hours per week. A regular schedule of three to four hours of classroom instruction in the mornings throughout the week is encouraged. Class size should be approximately five to eight students. ECA approval is required for regular classes of more than 10 students. While conversational language instruction will be necessary to help students function in their immersion setting, classes should also provide instruction in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, as well as speaking, listening, reading, and writing, including non-Roman alphabets. Plans should indicate flexibility and responsiveness for accommodating a variety of learning levels. Language instruction should be designed to maximize language gains and aim

to advance students roughly one to two sub-levels on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency scale by the end of the program. Applicants should plan to cover the costs of required instructional material for participants.

Cultural and Thematic Programming: Propose cultural enrichment activities to enhance the participants' understanding of the host country's/location's culture, history, environment, diversity, social systems, and current events at each overseas institute. All cultural enrichment activities should incorporate a language-learning element. Applicants are encouraged to integrate relevant current events, historical information, and other regionally or culturally relevant subject matter into the language course curricula. Applicants should also propose a foreign policy theme to be integrated into the overall program design for each institute. Foreign policy themes can be explored in a number of ways, including but not limited to, through course content, extracurricular programming, and excursions. General State Department foreign policy themes can be located here - [Policy Issues - United States Department of State](#). The foreign policy theme should be relevant to the location of the overseas institute and may be broadened beyond the list of policy issues provided on the State Department website. ECA will approve all foreign policy themes.

Community Engagement: Propose innovative ideas for participants to use their language skills in both structured activities and unstructured, independent activities while engaging with the host community in a safe and meaningful manner.

Language Partners: Pair participants with local peers to practice language outside of the classroom and to connect them to the local culture and community. Participants should meet with their language partners at least weekly.

Living Learning Housing: Arrange for housing for the duration of the institute, preferably with a host family and/or native language roommates to maximize participants' exposure to host location language and culture. Develop a process for identifying and screening host families for suitability, including whenever possible and culturally appropriate, reference and background checks. Provide host families with a substantive orientation and maintain regular contact with host families throughout the institute to answer questions and address concerns. Host families must have adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations and may receive a reasonable reimbursement to cover the costs associated with hosting a student, but not to serve as a financial incentive.

Ensure that non-host family housing arrangements, such as dormitories or group housing, provide safe and appropriate living accommodations. All accommodations, including host family homes and group housing, must have smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and appropriate emergency exits. The cost of smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and/or other safety-related items may be included in the program budget.

Language Policy: To promote maximum language learning, establish and enforce particular times and/or settings in which participants are required to speak only the target language.

Language Assessment: Develop an assessment plan to ensure the appropriate levels of instruction at the start of and during the program. Make explicit accommodation for learners of varying skill levels. Provide plans for supporting participants who do not perform at the level at which they tested and are placed.

Orientations: Provide participants with the following orientations in country/location:

Arrival: Provide a substantive orientation for participants on arrival in the host country; request a security briefing by the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Officer (RSO) or other U.S. Embassy official and a briefing from the PDS, which may include an overview of State Department careers.

Closing: Provide an on-site closing orientation to prepare participants for their return to the United States. Closing orientations should include a discussion of the following topics: required post-program language testing; post-program evaluation; tips for cultural re-entry; and discussing the CLS experience upon return to the United States.

Meals: Arrange for the provision of three meals per day for all participants for the duration of the program. It is expected that the majority of meals will be provided by host families, educational institutions, and/or arranged as group meals with other students. Participant stipends should cover the costs of additional meals as needed.

Stipends: Provide a stipend to participants to cover reasonable costs for incidentals during the program. The stipend may also include funds to reimburse participants for required program benefits, such as meals, transportation, and/or housing on program and incidentals that may occur during travel to and from the program site. All participants in a particular institute or country should receive the same stipend, unless otherwise authorized by ECA. The CLS Program may cover incidentals in addition to the stipend, such as medical expenses, in cases of unusual hardship, as determined by the award recipient and approved by ECA

Emergency Contact Information and Access: Supply each participant with a cell phone or SIM card with in-country calling capability and the means to communicate with a local representative in an emergency. Provide participants with emergency contact cards and ensure that participants have access to emergency contact information for the institute staff, the award recipient, and the appropriate U.S. Embassy or Consulate prior to international departure.

U.S. Embassy/Consulate Coordination: Establish a working relationship with the PDS of the relevant U.S. Embassy/Consulate for each institute. ECA will assist in facilitating initial

communication between PDS and CLS institute staff. ECA encourages PDS staff to engage with CLS participants on program. To that end, institutes should invite PDS participation in CLS events, and respond to requests or invitations from PDS, as appropriate. If the political situation in any country results in the need for the U.S. Embassy/Consulate to assume more responsibility, the award recipient and institute staff should work with the Embassy/Consulate as appropriate.

Staffing: Identify an Institute Director for each overseas language institute. Ensure that all institutes are appropriately staffed and have the physical space (i.e., classrooms, common areas) to ensure the successful delivery of high-quality language immersion program and provide adequate support and guidance to participants.

Assign and train a Resident Director, preferably a U.S. citizen, who speaks both English and the target language to each institute. The Resident Director serves as the primary on-site resource and support for participants regarding academic, social, and/or personal issues on program.

b. Participant Monitoring and Support

Participant well-being is a top priority of the U.S. Department of State. The applicant must propose a plan for monitoring participants' safety and welfare while on program. Staff from the award recipient should be available throughout the duration of the program to help ensure health, safety, and emotional well-being of participants and deal effectively with misunderstandings, adjustment issues, and emergencies. Staff roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined and explained to participants. The award recipient must provide guidance and training to overseas staff on handling student support issues. Each institute must have a trained, English-speaking Resident Director whose primary responsibility is participant support. The award recipient must ensure that all staff who have regular contact with participants have undergone a reasonable level of screening for suitability and adhere to professional standards of conduct, including standards on sexual harassment and abuse.

The award recipient must ensure that all participants abide by U.S. and local laws; the CLS Terms and Conditions; and other program standards and requirements. Develop disciplinary procedures that include ECA approval for termination and dismissal from program. Convey serious issues and concerns to ECA in a timely fashion. Inform ECA immediately of any requests from participants to voluntarily leave the program.

The award recipient must immediately report to ECA any incident or allegation involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation, harassment, or abuse of any kind experienced by a CLS participant that has been reported to CLS Program or institute staff. Inform ECA promptly of any behavior, incident, or serious problem that could result in a request for program dismissal

or that could be expected to bring the Department of State or the exchange program into notoriety or disrepute.

In addition, in order to ensure participant safety and well-being, applicants must provide a comprehensive plan to address emergencies that may occur before or during the program that may impact individual participants or the entire group. The plan must clearly identify lines of responsibility and communication with ECA, sub-recipients, institute staff, participants, and appropriate U.S. Embassies or Consulates.

Applicants must also develop a plan to implement some or all of the language institutes virtually if deemed necessary by ECA. Virtual programming should include language instruction, language partner activities, cultural enrichment activities, pre- and post-program language assessment, program evaluation and outcome tracking, and participant support mechanisms.

c. Pre-Program Responsibilities and Requirements

The award recipient will be responsible for the following pre-program responsibilities and requirements for the implementation of the CLS overseas institutes:

Institute Placement: Assign participants to overseas institutes based on language level, overseas experience, and other relevant criteria to ensure that each participant is placed into an appropriate program to the extent possible. The proposal should address how the participants' language skills will be assessed for placement purposes, and on what basis program assignments will be made.

Health Information and Accommodations: Propose a process to collect health history information for finalists and alternates to help ensure participants' health and safety on the program. Work with ECA and institute staff to make reasonable accommodations for participants as needed. Protect all PII.

Terms and Conditions: In consultation with ECA, develop CLS Terms and Conditions for the overseas institutes. The key conditions, benefits, and terms of the program should be fully described to candidates before they accept the award. Ensure that all participants agree to the CLS Terms and Conditions, as well as other forms and documents as required by ECA.

Passport Assistance: Develop a process to provide participants without a passport and demonstrated financial need with funding to acquire a passport. Plan must outline how financial need will be determined.

Standardized Language Assessment: In consultation with ECA, identify and use a standardized language assessment tool to evaluate the baseline (pre-program) and post-program oral proficiency language skills of all CLS participants in the overseas institutes. After the

completion of the post-program assessments, provide ECA with the assessment results, including analyses by language and institute.

Pre-Program Orientation: Organize substantive pre-program orientations for all participants, including information on program policies, guidelines on health and safety, tips for success on program, country/location and site-specific information, alumni benefits, and an overview of non-competitive eligibility. Applicants may propose to hold a one-day in-person orientation in the United States, to hold all pre-program orientation activities virtually, or a combination of in-person and virtual. Key components of the orientation must be covered regardless of format. Comprehensive information packets should be provided, preferably online, well in advance of the start of the program. Key sections of the Terms and Conditions should be reviewed in the pre-program orientation.

Travel: Arrange round-trip domestic travel between the participant's city of residence, to the pre-departure orientation (if held in-person), and to the CLS overseas institute location, including arranging for transport to and from the airport to the institute location while in country/on location. U.S. based incidentals associated with travel such as transportation to and from the airport, baggage fees, and meals while travelling should also be covered and may be covered in the stipend. Ensure that all travel arrangements are in accordance with the Fly America Act. Provide dates of international and domestic travel to ECA in advance of travel. Make arrangements and pay costs for obtaining all necessary visas, including transit visas.

STEP Registration: Provide information to all participants about the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step/> and ensure that all participants are registered in STEP prior to the start of the program.

Health Benefits: Enroll participants in ECA's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) health benefits program and facilitate claims as necessary. Participants may be enrolled in ECA's ASPE with no charge to the grant or other health benefits program as directed. Please refer to <https://www.sevencorners.com/gov/usdos> for more information on coverage.

Communication: Communicate with participants in a timely fashion in advance of departure to provide them with program information, language preparation materials, flight details, and accommodations information. Communicate with participants to address any concerns or questions during the program.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

The award recipient will be responsible for implementing CLS virtual programming. In FY 2025, the CLS program anticipates supporting approximately 120 students for CLS virtual programming, which provides U.S. undergraduate students who may not have access to study a critical language on their home campus -- or have demonstrated barriers that preclude them

from doing so -- an opportunity to study a critical language virtually. CLS virtual programming should provide intensive live group instruction, cultural activities, monthly professional development workshops, and inclusive support for eight to ten weeks over the summer.

ECA anticipates that the award recipient will identify qualified overseas partner organizations to directly implement the academic components of CLS virtual programming. The applicant may propose to directly implement some virtual programs or specific components of one or more virtual programs if they have capacity in a country/location where the target language is widely spoken. The applicant must work with proposed overseas implementing organizations to design, plan, and implement CLS virtual programming. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all proposed partners maintain program standards and meet all program requirements.

Applicants may also propose to support virtual tutoring opportunities for CLS alumni with instructors and/or staff from the CLS overseas institutes or virtual programs. All languages for virtual tutoring will be approved by ECA annually.

For FY 2025, CLS anticipates supporting the following regions and participants per language for CLS virtual programming:

Near East and North Africa Region – Arabic Virtual Programming

Arabic:

- Participants: Approximately 20 participants.
- Language Levels: Beginner (no previous formal language study of Arabic)
- Locations: Partner should be located in a country in North Africa, the Middle East, or the Gulf region
- Note: Classroom instruction should emphasize MSA and the local dialect and should approach Arabic as a continuum in which certain situations require MSA while others require dialect.

East Asia and Pacific Region – Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, and Korean Virtual Programming

Chinese (Mandarin):

- Participants: Approximately 20 participants.
- Language Levels: Beginner (no previous formal language study of Chinese)
- Locations: ECA has a preference for the partner to be located in mainland China, but partners may also be proposed for Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, or another location where Chinese is spoken widely.

Note: Chinese instruction should be in Mandarin only. Teaching materials used in the program should be available in both simplified and traditional character versions. The Hanyu Pinyin Romanization system should be used.

Japanese:

- Participants: Approximately 40 participants.
- Language Levels: 20 participants for beginner (no previous formal language study of Japanese) and 20 participants for advanced beginner.
- Locations: Partner should be located in Japan.

Korean:

- Participants: Approximately 20 participants.
- Language Levels: Beginner (no previous formal language study of Korean)
- Locations: Partner should be located in South Korea

Europe and Eurasia Region – Russian Virtual Language Programming*Russian:*

- Participants: Approximately 20 participants.
- Language Levels: Beginner (no previous formal language study of Russian)
- Locations: Partner should be located in Central Asia, the Caucasus or in the Baltic States.

The approximate target distribution of participants by region and language is detailed above. Applicants are encouraged to maximize the number of proposed participants supported under this award.

ECA reserves the right to make changes to eligible proposed partners, countries, locations, languages, program components, number of proposed participants by language, or other elements of the program design or implementation, considering the availability of funding, or other factors determined by ECA. The final slate of partners and locations of partners is subject to approval by ECA.

a. CLS Virtual Program Design

Unless otherwise directed by ECA, CLS virtual programming should be structured based on the following parameters:

- Duration: Should be eight – ten weeks, not including the pre-program orientation.
- Dates: Should take place during summer 2025 (late May to mid-August).

The applicant must integrate the following components into program design for each virtual program. All costs for these elements will be covered from the award.

Language Instruction: Virtual synchronous live group instruction should be no less than a total eight hours per week. Instruction should be scheduled at a regular time that works well for proposed partners and participants, taking time zones into account. Small class sizes should be proposed to maximize language acquisition. Language instruction should cover speaking, listening, reading, and writing, including non-Roman alphabets. Language instruction should be designed to maximize language gains and should aim to advance students roughly two sublevels on the ACTFL proficiency scale. Applicants should also plan to cover the costs of required instructional material for participants.

Cultural Programming: The applicant should also propose virtual cultural enrichment activities to enhance the participants' understanding of the country/location and/or region in which the target language is spoken. Cultural programming can explore a variety of topics, including, but not limited to, culture, history, environment, diversity, and social systems. Applicants are encouraged to propose cultural programming that incorporates a language learning element appropriate to the beginning level.

Language Partners: Pair participants with language partners who can function as virtual peers to the participants to practice language and provide participants with greater insights of the culture of the host country/location and/or region. As participants are absolute beginners, applicants can propose arrangements that start the language partner component later in the program and/or partner multiple participants with one language partner.

Language Assessment: Develop a plan to assess participants' exposure to the language (if any) for placement purposes. Develop a plan to provide participants with targeted feedback as they progress through the program.

Professional Development Workshops: Incorporate monthly virtual professional development workshops for all participants into their program design. Workshops can include all participants in one session, be broken up by language, or other proposed subgroupings of participants. These workshops can focus on continued language learning opportunities and/or professional development opportunities. The final workshop should encourage applicants to apply for the CLS overseas institutes the following summer; and cover alumni benefits, non-competitive eligibility; language testing; and other final program requirements.

Stipends: Modest stipends may be provided to participants to offset reasonable costs for equipment (ex. web camera or microphone) and connectivity. Stipends should not be used to cover any other costs, including, but not limited to, costs of major equipment (such as a new laptop, computer, or tablet), the cost of phone or internet connectivity plans, living expenses, or physical and mental health expenses.

Staffing: Identify an on-site lead for each virtual program proposed. Ensure that all partners proposed for virtual programming are appropriately staffed and have the necessary technical

requirements in place for the delivery of high-quality virtual language programs. Applicants should also propose appropriate staffing to provide adequate support and guidance to participants.

The award recipient must ensure that all staff who have regular contact with CLS participants have undergone a reasonable level of screening for suitability and adhere to professional standards of conduct, including standards on sexual harassment and abuse.

Participant Monitoring and Support: The award recipient must ensure that all participants abide by the CLS Terms and Conditions, and other program standards and requirements. Develop disciplinary procedures that include ECA approval for termination and dismissal from program. Convey serious issues and concerns to ECA in a timely fashion. Inform ECA immediately of any requests from participants to voluntarily leave the program.

The award recipient must immediately report to ECA any incident or allegation involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation, harassment, or abuse of any kind experienced by a CLS participant that has been reported to CLS Program or proposed partner staff. Inform ECA promptly of any behavior, incident, or serious problem that could result in a request for program dismissal or that could be expected to bring the Department of State or the exchange program into notoriety or disrepute.

b. Pre-Program Responsibilities and Requirements

The award recipient will be responsible for the following pre-program responsibilities and requirements for the implementation of CLS virtual programming:

Placement: Assign participants to virtual institutes and classes based on time zone and other appropriate criteria as approved by ECA.

Accommodations: Propose a process to collect information from participants who need reasonable accommodation. Work with ECA and institute staff to make reasonable accommodations for participants as needed. Protect all PII.

Terms and Conditions: In consultation with ECA, develop CLS Terms and Conditions. The key conditions, benefits, and terms of the program should be fully described to candidates before they accept the award. Ensure that all participants agree to the CLS Terms and Conditions, as well as other forms and documents as required by ECA.

Standardized Language Assessment: In consultation with ECA, identify and use a standardized language assessment tool to evaluate post-program oral proficiency language skills of all participants. After the completion of the post-program assessments, provide ECA with the assessment results, including analyses by language and virtual program.

Communication: Communicate with participants and/or ensure that implementing organizations contact participants in a timely fashion in advance of and during the program to provide them with program information and support.

Pre-Program Orientation: Organize virtual pre-program orientation for all participants, including information on program policies, tips for success on program, program-specific information, alumni benefits, and an overview of non-competitive eligibility. Information packets should be provided well in advance of the start of the program and should remain accessible to the participants.

4. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

The award recipient is also responsible for the following requirements associated with the implementation of CLS overseas institutes and virtual programming.

a. Program Planning and Management

Staffing Plan: Provide an overall staffing plan including level of effort for each position. Allocate one lead individual to manage the project and report to ECA. ECA will approve key project staff, as well as any changes in key staff during the period of the award.

Coordination: Provide overall coordination of key program activities with ECA. Conduct regular meetings in-person or virtually with the ECA Program Officer and key personnel. Provide ECA with minutes of these meetings, including action items and key deadlines. Develop and share a calendar and timeline of key program activities.

Operational Guidelines: Work with ECA to gather CLS Program policies for CLS overseas institutes and virtual programming into one comprehensive set of Operational Guidelines to help ensure consistency of policy and procedures across all organizations and institutes. In consultation with ECA, develop and/or refine additional policies and procedures to be included in the Operational Guidelines.

Institute Plans: Provide to ECA a detailed schedule and plan for each CLS overseas institute and virtual program. Describe in detail the major components of the program (as applicable), including project planning; staffing plan and staff qualifications; host venues; orientations (on-site and closing); assessment and testing; language instruction; educational and cultural enrichment activities; participant living arrangements; participant monitoring plan; and logistics.

Academic Credit: The proposal should include a plan for CLS participants who successfully complete the CLS overseas institutes and virtual programming to receive academic credit from an accredited U.S. college or university.

Institute Directors' Meeting: Plan and implement an in-person or virtual Institute Directors' meeting for all overseas institute directors, directors or leads of CLS virtual programs, and relevant ECA staff to ensure that a single worldwide program identity is cultivated and maintained, and to share and discuss policies, procedures, and best practices. This multi-day meeting should be held in January or February of the program year and be planned in close consultation with ECA. The meeting may be held either in Washington, DC, or online, as approved in advance by ECA. The award recipient and each CLS overseas institute/virtual program should be represented by at least one participant at the meeting. ECA will present U.S. Department of State priorities that are relevant to the CLS Program.

Annual Planning Meeting: Convene an annual planning meeting, either in Washington, DC or online, at the start of the award for key personnel and ECA staff. Provide ECA with minutes and deliverables from these meetings.

Congressional and Gubernatorial Notifications: Manage all administrative tasks associated with sending notifications to Members of the U.S. Congress and Governors of U.S. states and territories, as well as the Mayor of Washington DC, about CLS participants in their respective locales.

Performance Monitoring and Evaluation: Present a plan to measure the success of the CLS overseas institutes and virtual programming, during the program implementation, as well as at the end of the program. ECA expects that the award recipient will be able to provide relevant output and outcome data, including satisfaction with the program, language acquisition, cultural learning, and changes in behavior as a result of the program. Data collection should include assessment of program-specific aspects, such as logistical arrangements and program components, as well as overall impact and outcomes for participants and host communities (overseas institutes only). These requirements are in addition to section D.10 the Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation section in the NOFO.

Overseas CLS Institute and or/Virtual Program Partner Capacity Building: ECA supports efforts to strengthen the capacity of CLS overseas institute and/or virtual program partners that host CLS participants. Although not required, proposals and budgets may include activities to strengthen partners' capacity for language-teaching and/or hosting American students.

Build Relationships: For purposes of program promotion, leveraging resources, and providing alumni opportunities, the award recipient should cultivate relationships with organizations that implement other ECA-sponsored exchange programs including, but not limited to, the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y), Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant

(FLTA) program, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, and the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, as well as other U.S. government-funded critical language programs, such as STARTALK, Boren Awards, The Language Flagship, and the Fulbright-Hays Program.

Documentation: Provide and maintain detailed documentation of all program policies and procedures, including a separate section on emergency management and protocols for review and approval by ECA. Emergency management should clearly identify lines of responsibility and communication with ECA, sub-recipients, institute staff, participants, and appropriate U.S. Embassies or Consulates, as applicable.

IT Systems and Databases: Provide ECA with direct access to all CLS-specific databases and IT systems (i.e., for applicants, alumni, and advisors), and provide periodic electronic data uploads of participant statistics for ECA's participant and alumni databases. The award recipient may contact ECA for additional information on the technical requirements for the data updates.

Maintain current participant data electronically and in such a manner as to protect PII under all applicable laws, including individual award amounts and fiscal year of funding. Required data fields for the electronic data system include, but are not limited to, the following: first name; middle name; last name; gender; date of birth; country of residence; field of study; home institution; host institution; host country; fiscal year of funding; award amount; duration and dates of program abroad; and home U.S. state and Congressional district. All records and data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and be provided to ECA upon request.

Communication with ECA: Respond in a timely manner to inquiries about the program from ECA.

General Communication: Respond in a timely manner to inquiries about the program from members of the public, academic institutions, and study abroad organizations.

b. Financial Oversight and Reporting

Provide thorough and robust financial oversight and reporting. The award recipient must comply with ECA protocols on frequency of financial reporting and processes. Decisions on the use of unused funds must be made in collaboration with ECA to enhance and implement the overall goals of the CLS Program. Additionally, the award recipient must ensure the cost-effectiveness of implementation via innovative measures. Additional deliverables and requirements include the items listed below.

- Manage any disbursements for participants via direct deposits to participant bank accounts, providing the option for students without bank accounts to receive their funding through another mechanism.

- Consult ECA on CLS overseas institute and virtual programming award terminations, revocations, and recouped funds, and provide documentation of these actions to ECA, at a date/time agreed upon with ECA.
- An overall budget for the recruitment and outreach plan with estimated cost breakdowns by proposed key strategy components such as materials, conference attendance, and campus visits.
- Audit internal functions, systems, and controls as necessary, and report any irregularities if necessary or required per audit guidelines.
- Ensure that participants comply with the Fly America Act and other relevant regulations when using CLS funds to purchase international plane tickets and other requested costs.

A.4. Recipient Responsibilities

The Award recipient(s) responsibilities include the following broad categories (detailed in section A.3. Program Specific Guidelines):

1. Implementation of Administrative Components for the CLS program as outlined in this solicitation, which includes:
 - Recruitment, outreach, and program promotion.
 - Application, selection, and notification of participants in CLS overseas institutes and virtual programming.
 - Alumni programming and tracking.
2. Implementation of the CLS Program, including overseas institutes and virtual programming for approximately 522 participants as described in this solicitation.
3. Participant costs for CLS overseas institutes, which include:
 - **Travel:** Round-trip domestic travel between the participant's city of residence, to the pre-departure orientation (if held in-person), and to the CLS overseas institute location, including arranging for transport to and from the airport to the institute location while in country/on location. U.S. based incidentals associated with travel such as transportation to and from the airport, baggage fees, and meals while travelling should also be covered and may be covered in the stipend.
 - **Orientations:** Pre-departure, arrival, and re-entry orientations.
 - **Visas:** Host country entry/exit and transit visas, as needed.
 - **Tuition and related academic expenses:** Including support and testing for placement and language acquisition.
 - **Educational and cultural programming:** Include extracurricular activities, academic programs, and language-focused excursions within the host country.
 - **Meals:** Three meals per day, provided through the program, host family, and/or stipend.

- **Accommodations:** With a host family or in a dormitory or other appropriate group housing as outlined in this solicitation.
- **Cell phones or Sim cards**
- **Stipend:** To cover additional living expenses, local transportation, and/or incidentals. In the event of virtual programming, modest stipends may be included to help defray the cost of access to computer equipment and/or connectivity.
- **Passports:** For participants who qualify for passport assistance.
- **Additional Funds:** The CLS Program may cover incidentals in addition to the stipend, such as medical expenses, in cases of unusual hardship, as determined by the award recipient(s) and approved by ECA.

The CLS Program **does not cover** the following:

- **Passports:** Costs associated with obtaining a valid U.S. passport for those that do not qualify for CLS passport assistance.
- **Medical:** Required medical examinations and immunizations; health benefits beyond ASPE, unless in cases of unusual hardship, as determined by the award recipient and approved by ECA.

4. Participant costs for CLS virtual programming, which include:

- **Orientations and Workshops**
- **Tuition and related academic expenses:** Including support and testing for placement and language acquisition.
- **Educational and cultural programming**
- **Stipend:** Modest stipends may be included to help defray the cost of access to computer equipment and/or connectivity.

The CLS Program **does not cover** the following:

- Costs of major equipment: new laptop, computer, or tablet.
- Phone or internet connectivity plans.
- Living expenses.
- Physical and mental health expenses (not covered by ASPE).

A.5. Substantial Involvement:

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

1. Approve public-facing documentation, including program Terms and Conditions and participant selection letters.
2. Approve selection of implementing organizations, including budgets and proposed institute plans for CLS overseas institutes and virtual programming.
3. Review and approve modifications to locations, placement numbers, or program structure.

4. Consult on content for and participation in annual Institute Directors' meeting.
5. Review and approve all post-program and alumni activities, including program performance monitoring activities.
6. Approve application and selection process, including eligibility criteria of participants and application forms.
7. Approve selection of finalists and alternate candidates.
8. Approve Congressional and other government official notification letters.
9. Approve scope of work and resumes for consultants hired to perform key program functions.
10. Coordinate with ECA/PASC to publicize the program through various media outlets and to respond to any media queries. Note: The ECA Program Officer will approve media outreach by the award recipient, review all media requests for clearance, and review the nomination of CLS participants and alumni to participate in media outreach regarding the program.

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.5.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2025.

Approximate Total Funding: \$8,990,000 pending the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: One.

Approximate Average Award: \$8,990,000 pending the availability of funds.

Minimum "Floor" of Award: \$8,990,000 pending the availability of funds.

Maximum "Ceiling" of Award: \$8,990,000 pending the availability of funds.

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

Anticipated Project Completion Date: September 30, 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 this cooperative agreement for two additional, consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it 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.

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 nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements

The following additional eligibility requirements apply to this NOFO announcement:

1. ECA's grant guidelines require that organizations demonstrate at least four years of experience in conducting international exchanges to be eligible for awards exceeding \$130,000 in ECA funding. As noted in section B above, ECA anticipates issuing one cooperative agreement, for a total of \$8,990,000, pending the availability of funds. Therefore, organizations that do not demonstrate four years of experience in conducting international exchanges in your proposal are ineligible to apply under this competition.
2. 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.
3. 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. for more information.
4. 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 Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov> or from ECA website at <https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding>.

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 under D.16. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

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 budget narrative.

Proposals should include the following items:

Executive Summary (One page)

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

- Name of organization/participating institution
- Scope and Goals
- Number and description of participants
- Description of the key program activities

- Anticipated results (short and long-term)
- Funding level requested from ECA, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources

Program Narrative

In a maximum of 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below and in this solicitation. Refer to the proposal review criteria in this solicitation for further guidance.

- Vision (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits)
- Recruitment, Outreach, and Program Promotion
- Application, Selection, and Notification
- Project Activities outlined in this solicitation
- Alumni Engagement, Activities, and tracking as outlined in the solicitation
- Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
- Diversity
- Institutional Capacity and Project Management
- Partner implementing organizations, including their roles and unique contributions to the program.
- Work plan/Timeframe.

Additional Information to be Submitted:

- **Calendar of Activities** or timetable that demonstrates the timing and organization of the major program activities.
- **Letters of Endorsement** from collaborating organizations or institutions indicating their agreement and the role they will play in the program.
- **Resumes** of key staff members of the applicant and collaborating organizations. (No resume should exceed two pages.)
- **Recruitment, Outreach, and Program Promotion Plan**
- **Application, Selection, and Notification Plan**
- **Emergency and Contingency Operating Plans**
- **Sample Participant Pre-Program Information Packet**
- **Sample Overseas Institute Plan** that shows the language instruction, educational enrichment activities, and cultural activities in which participants will engage. All educational enrichment and cultural activities must have a clear language-learning component.
- **Sample Virtual Program Plan** that shows the language instruction and cultural activities in which participants will engage.
- **Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and Sample Survey Instruments**, in addition to section D.10 the Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation in the NOFO
- **Alumni Activities Plan**
- **First-Time Applicant Attachments, if applicable**

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)

- 1.) 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);
- 2.) 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;
- 3.) 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 MyGrants

All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's MyGrants by accessing <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com> and clicking the "create an account" link. MyGrants 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 MyGrants 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/>.

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

D.8. For Informational Purposes Only - 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. 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

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

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>.

The proposal must 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)
 - E1.1.11: Percent of American participants indicating a change in their understanding of their host country's culture and values
 - 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
 - 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
 - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries
 - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation
 - E4.0.09: Percent of participants reporting an increase in language 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)
 - E4.1.06: Number of participants in programs with formal, dedicated language learning activities
- 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. 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>. 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. 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 outcomes 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 MyGrants 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

Proposals should include information within the program narrative section(s) 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.

MyGrants RPM Reporting Requirements

MyGrants 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 MyGrants 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 MyGrants RPM. The data stored in the MyGrants 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.

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 detailed, line item budget for the entire program and a budget narrative.

D.14.a. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

Allowable overhead costs include items such as the following:

- Staff salaries and benefits

- Staff travel and per diem
- Rent and facilities
- Furniture and equipment
- Meetings and conferences
- Emergency/incidentals for participants
- Communication costs
- Network charges
- Indirect costs
- OMB Guidance 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F Audits

Applicant organizations should provide a detailed explanation of overhead (what elements of the budget it is based upon and how it is calculated).

b) Allowable participant support costs to be funded by the award include items such as the following:

- Publicity, pre-departure, and orientation materials and expenses
- Medical review of health forms
- Costs of national review committees including travel and per diem if proposed
- Website/on-line applications/database management
- Expenses of pre-program orientations
- Expenses associated with virtual programming
- Expenses associated with CLS Scholarships
- Program materials
- Participant and staff travel
- Cultural activities
- Standardized language proficiency testing
- Accredited academic credit
- Participant food and lodging
- Participant stipends
- Housing payments
- Language program tuition
- Teacher training if proposed
- Alumni and follow-on activities
- Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)
- Other justifiable expenses directly related to supporting program activities

While there is no rigid ratio of overhead to participant support costs, ECA urges applicant organizations to keep overhead costs as low and reasonable as possible. Proposals should show strong cost sharing contributions from the applicant organization and other sources.

D.15. 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.16. Application Deadline and Method of Submission

Application Deadline Date: Monday, June 3, 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.17. 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.17.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.17.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.17.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.17.d. Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

Applicants have until 11:59 p.m., Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after 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.18. 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 grant panel and may be reviewed by PDS 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 ECA's Assistant Secretary. Only an ECA Grant Officer has the final authority to issue assistance awards.

E.2. Review Criteria

An ECA grants 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. Quality of the Program Idea, Program Planning, and Ability to Achieve Program

Objectives: Proposals should be original, well-defined, and relevant to ECA's mission. Proposals should have a detailed agenda and work plan that demonstrates your institution's ability to carry out the program. The plan should follow the program guidelines described in this solicitation. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's goals and objectives. The program plans should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Emergency or contingency plans should be clearly articulated and comprehensive.

2. Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability: Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with

all reporting requirements for past ECA awards (grants or cooperative agreements). ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

3. **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.
4. **Participant Monitoring:** The safety and well-being of CLS Program participants is of highest priority. Proposals should include a plan for ensuring and monitoring the safety and well-being of CLS participants while on program/scholarship. The plan should clearly address protocols for emergencies for both individuals and groups.
5. **Follow-on/Alumni Activities:** Proposals should provide a plan for continued contact with alumni to ensure that they are tracked over time, engaged in appropriate alumni activities, and provided opportunities to reinforce the knowledge and skills acquired on the CLS Program as outlined in the solicitation.
6. **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.
7. **Cost-effectiveness and Cost-sharing:** The overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should demonstrate a quality, cost-effective program. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

F.1. Award Notices

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal 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. 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 period of performance of the award ends; 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 MyGrants.
2. Required MODE data (see Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation section) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. Frequency of these reports will be determined by MELI and the Program Officer. Aggregate data and the raw data file

must be uploaded by the Recipient as an *RPM Performance Report* under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's MyGrants.

3. 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 MyGrants, 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.
4. A final program and financial report no more than 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award.
5. The award recipient(s) will be expected to keep ECA informed of program progress, as well as other aspects of the program throughout the year. During the implementation of CLS Institutes and virtual programming, award recipient(s) will be expected to provide brief weekly updates or highlights on each institute, as well as final institute report(s) at the conclusion of the program. The recipient(s) must share program progress/performance monitoring reports, with ECA in a timely manner, and make appropriate adjustments to the programs in consultation with ECA.
6. Other ad hoc reports as requested. These reports may include, but are not limited to, separate breakdowns for students studying in regions or countries of strategic interest, participant demographics (including home state/ voting district/ institution type, etc.), information on alumni, and award information.

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.4. Program Data Requirements

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

1. Name, address, and contact information of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel, including

participants in virtual programming.

2. Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

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

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Kaveri Advani, U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Educational Programs, U.S. Study Abroad Branch, ECA/A/S/Q, 202-739-1049, Advanike@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.

Scott Weinhold
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

March 28, 2024