



Educational and Cultural Affairs

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

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Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)

Amendment to Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2024 Online Professional English Network (OPEN) Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0010309

Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.421

Deadline for Applications: **May 30, 2024**

Executive Summary:

The Office of English Language Programs (ECA/A/L) of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the FY 2024 Online Professional English Network (OPEN) Program, which offers foreign English teaching professionals and language learners the opportunity for professional development through high-quality, accessible, and openly licensed virtual resources, including online English language teacher development courses, online English language learning courses, virtual exchanges, webinars, an alumni community of practice (CoP), multiple social media channels, and other types of engaging and innovative online learning.

In cooperation with ECA/A/L, the award recipient will manage the selection, development, and delivery of appropriate online TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) learning courses which will be offered to English language educators or learners on an easily accessible online learning management system (LMS). Courses, webinars, and other virtual programming may be offered globally, regionally, or to specific countries at the request of U.S. embassies. Courses and exchanges are developed by U.S. academic institutions, educational NGOs, or TESOL professional associations, while webinars and other social media programming are developed by U.S.-based TESOL professionals. All content produced for this program should be accessible according to Section 508 compliance standards, openly licensed with a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) License, and follow best practices for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA).

ECA/A/L anticipates an unlimited number of English language professionals, educators, and learners will benefit from the openly licensed virtual programming, webinars, massive open online courses (MOOCs), and content developed under this award. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code, Section 26 U.S.C 501 (c) (3) may submit proposals to administer and manage the FY 2024 OPEN Program.

It is ECA/A/L's intent to award one cooperative agreement in the amount of \$6,000,000, pending the availability of FY 2024 funds, to an applicant that has the ability to achieve these

objectives and provide the necessary infrastructure and experience. ECA/A/L reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Please see section B. Federal Award Information, below for additional details.

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.

This NOFO has been amended to extend the deadline for submission of applications due to an unexpected change in the May grants.gov maintenance window and unavailability of the submission system. The original deadline date was May 21, 2024. The new deadline for submission of proposals is May 30, 2024.

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 OPEN Program offers professional development for English as a foreign language (EFL) educators, English language learners, and professionals in fields where English functions as an international language through virtual programming developed by accredited U.S. educational institutions and U.S.- based TESOL professionals. A primary goal of the OPEN Program is to develop EFL educators' capacity to teach U.S. communicative language teaching practices and current trends in TESOL by providing direct access to U.S. experts in the field of TESOL in order to improve English language education overseas and prepare alumni to formally disseminate the newly acquired knowledge to colleagues.

OPEN programming promotes mutual understanding between the United States and other countries by increasing capacity for English language communication in professional contexts overseas. Content may also address key mission goals and priorities, based on U.S. Department of State foreign policy goals and/or specific U.S. embassy goals and priorities such as

educational technology, media literacy, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). Participants are expected to cascade knowledge by sharing their newly acquired knowledge with their colleagues in their home countries and other participants and stakeholders around the world through an online CoP for alumni. U.S. embassies may also request continued alumni involvement in events, workshops, or other such programming with the goal of cascading new knowledge and providing new opportunities for leadership and training of trainers.

A.3. Program Specific Guidelines

1) Program Categories

- Global Online Courses (GOCs)

The award recipient will recruit, select, and issue sub-awards for up to ten GOCs to U.S. academic institutions, educational NGOs, or TESOL professional associations for the duration of the award. Courses should be appropriate for English language teaching professionals from multiple geographic regions in global, regional, or country-specific cohorts and focus on U.S. communicative language teaching practices and current trends in TESOL related to global and regional priorities. GOCs must also include culturally appropriate content that provides participants insights into U.S. culture, society, and democratic values. The award recipient must explain how it will identify the topics of the courses to be provided based on the needs and priorities of ECA/A/L, specific regions, U.S. embassies, and countries. In order to select suitable courses, the award recipient should demonstrate that it has the appropriate staff with subject-matter expertise and expertise in the field of TESOL, particularly in working with non-native English teaching professionals abroad.

The proposal must demonstrate the award recipient's capacity to draft requests for applications (RFA) and administer an open competition to issue sub-awards to appropriate U.S. academic institutions, educational NGOs, or TESOL professional associations. The award recipient may not issue a sub-award to itself to create or provide courses. The award recipient should also demonstrate that it has or will procure the appropriate tools and will have the appropriate staff or consultants with expertise in DEIA principles, Section 508 compliance, open educational licensing, curriculum design, online instructional design, and graphic and video design to manage and train GOC partners.

The award recipient is responsible for the administration of an open competition, or limited and sole source competitions with ECA approval, to select sub-awardees to design, pilot, revise and/or deliver GOCs including those previously developed for a series of academic quarters for the length of the award. The recipient, in collaboration

with ECA/A/L and the sub-award recipients, should also develop, maintain, or build upon strategies for participant placement in courses and for participant retention.

- Regional Online Course Offerings (ROCs)

Regional course offerings are provided online to meet the requests of U.S. embassies, as articulated in the needs analysis and with final approval from ECA/A/L. Such courses could involve adapting GOCs for a specific regional audience; taking advantage of an existing course through an individual or institution that is not among the GOC providers; or reaching out to an institution or individual to develop a course tailored to a specific context. ROCs should include culturally appropriate content that provides participants insights into U.S. culture, society, and democratic values.

The award recipient will manage regional course offerings through sub-awards to accredited U.S. academic institutions, educational NGOs, or TESOL professional associations. The award recipient may conduct needs analyses for proposed regional courses if requested by ECA/A/L, Regional English Language Officers (RELOs), and U.S. embassies. A plan for ROCs should include how, in coordination with ECA/A/L, the needs and requests of U.S. embassies will be assessed and how courses addressing these needs will be implemented throughout the duration of this award. This strategy should also include how such courses may be used or adapted for global audiences after initial iterations.

The award recipient needs to demonstrate capacity and expertise in DEIA principles, Section 508 compliance, open educational licensing, curriculum design, online instructional design, and graphic and video design in order to manage and train ROC partners.

- GOC and ROC Participants

Participants in GOCs and ROCs will be identified and/or selected by U.S. embassies and consulates in participating countries, based on allocations determined by ECA/A/L with the final selection made by ECA/A/L. Each course will host approximately 25 participants with up to 5,000 total participants during the length of this award, in addition to an unlimited number of participants who may access the Open Educational Resource (OER) materials and virtual learning tools.

The award recipient can expect that the participants would have the following qualifications:

- An ability to complete academic work at a U.S. university level roughly equivalent to American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) of Advanced – Mid language proficiency or Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B2
- Have regular access (at least two times per week) to a reliable, up-to-date computer or mobile device with high-speed internet connectivity;
- Basic technology skills related to typing in English, emailing, internet searching, downloading/uploading, using logins/passwords, reading e-files, completing online tasks, and submitting written assignments in a timely manner;
- Have at least 8-10 hours per week to devote to the coursework;
- Be a citizen of, and reside in, the nominating country for the duration of the course, with some exceptions for extenuating circumstances; and
- Not hold citizenship or be a resident of the United States.

*These criteria are only related to GOCs and ROCs, not to MOOC, webinar, or social media participants.

The successful completion of an online learning program can be challenging due to several factors, such as the participants' level of digital literacy, insufficient access to reliable internet connectivity, and competing professional and personal obligations. The award recipient should submit a narrative outlining a comprehensive strategy for improving participant retention to maximize course completion rates with participants who have limited English skills, digital literacy, and/or internet bandwidth.

- Virtual Exchanges

A virtual exchange is a professional development opportunity to enhance international EFL educators' knowledge and skills around a theme related to English language teaching and learning, such as educational technology and digital citizenship. Previous exchanges have focused on providing participants with the most current teaching methods, exposure to relevant educational technology, education policy, educational leadership, service learning, and education administration, in addition to exposure to the United States. The exchange occurs when culture and knowledge are shared among the U.S. based developers and the participants. The exchanges provide opportunities for participants to discuss U.S. culture and democratic values throughout the program. Participants of virtual exchanges are generally underserved English language teachers and administrators in K – 12 settings. The award recipient should be prepared to support participants with a language proficiency equivalent to ACTFL Intermediate-High

or CEFR B1 as well as for participants in 'low bandwidth' internet and limited technology settings.

The award recipient will recruit, select, develop, and conduct virtual exchanges through sub-awards to accredited U.S. academic institutions, educational NGOs, or TESOL professional associations with ECA/A/L approval. The award recipient may not issue a sub-award or contract to itself to create or provide these virtual exchanges. The recipient will work with ECA/A/L to define program expectations, including duration and number of participants. The award recipient may administer and implement up to four virtual exchanges based on the needs of ECA/A/L, RELOs, and U.S. embassies for the duration of the award. The award recipient may also conduct needs analyses for proposed virtual exchanges if requested by ECA/A/L, RELOs, and U.S. embassies. Finally, the award recipient needs to demonstrate capacity and expertise in DEIA principles, Section 508 compliance, open educational licensing, curriculum design, online instructional design, and graphic and video design to manage and train virtual exchanges partners.

- MOOCs

MOOCs are self-paced or facilitator-led courses for English language educators, learners, and professionals in fields where English is an international language. MOOCs are open to an unlimited number of participants and housed in an easily accessible LMS. Course topics should be related to global policy goals and should provide support for participants with a language proficiency equivalent to ACTFL Intermediate-High or CEFR B1 as well as supports for participants in 'low bandwidth' internet and limited technology settings. MOOCs should also include culturally appropriate content that provides participants insights into U.S. culture, society, and democratic values.

The award recipient will recruit, select, and issue sub-awards to U.S. academic institutions, educational NGOs, or TESOL professional associations through open competitions, limited-source contracts, or sole-source contracts (when approved by ECA/A/L). The award recipient needs to demonstrate capacity and expertise in DEIA principles, Section 508 compliance, open educational licensing, curriculum design, online instructional design, and graphic and video design in order to manage and train MOOC partners.

The proposal must explain how it will identify the topics of the courses to be provided based on the needs and priorities of ECA/A/L, specific regions, U.S. embassies, and countries. In order to select appropriate courses, the award recipient should demonstrate that it has the appropriate staff with subject-matter expertise and expertise in the field of TESOL, particularly in working with non-native English professionals abroad. The proposal should also include a plan for managing and

implementing self-paced or facilitated MOOCs over a series of academic quarters and, in collaboration with ECA/A/L, suggest strategies for ongoing promotion, participant retention, and alumni engagement throughout the length of the award.

- Social Media

ECA/A/L hosts the American English at State and the American English for Educators Facebook pages as well as the American English YouTube channel. These platforms have a combined reach of over four million followers. In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the award recipient will strategize themes and create content for various online platforms to promote English language learning and teacher development upon request.

The award recipient should plan theme development and content creation as well as management and moderation of the social media platforms throughout the length of the award. The plan should include specific ways which the award recipient will assess the needs of U.S. embassies and current and potential audiences. The social media plan should include information on types of content and strategies for engagement based on potential needs assessment results, as well as strategies for engaging award recipient staff or approved consultants in executing this plan.

The award recipient, at the request of and in collaboration with ECA/A/L, may redevelop the American English website or create an application (app), including options for obtaining an appropriate domain name, hosting of website or application, design, development and testing.

- Webinars

ECA/A/L has hosted the American English Live webinar series since 2010, and the award recipient will be a partner in the series implementation. The American English Live webinar series is an online professional development program for teachers, currently broadcast via Facebook Live on the American English for Educators Facebook page and other platforms. In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the award recipient will develop a calendar of American English Live webinars shared on one or more platforms that allow for global accessibility. In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the award recipient will also recruit and contract with U.S. subject-matter experts or TESOL professionals to prepare for and present each of these webinars.

The award recipient should plan for recruitment, topic selection, presenter collaboration, presentation development, and announcement of webinar series throughout the length of the award with up to 18 webinars annually. The recipient

should, in collaboration with ECA/A/L, develop strategies for the promotion of webinars, participant follow-on, and engagement.

- Teachers' Corner

Teachers' Corner is a monthly social media series hosted by American TESOL experts for English language educators overseas. This series offers in-depth teaching tips and discussions on trends in English language teaching and learning. The award recipient manages TESOL experts and implements up to 12 month-long campaigns a year. If requested by ECA/A/L, the award recipient recruits, selects themes, coordinates the call for proposals, collaborates with consultants, and publishes social media content.

- CoP

The award recipient will use, maintain, and update as necessary the existing online CoP for OPEN GOC alumni. Currently, the CoP has more than 7,500 alumni. The purpose of the online CoP is to ensure continued follow-on activity and alumni engagement, which ensures that Bureau-supported programs are not isolated events. In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the award recipient will develop strategies for maximizing participation on the CoP and create an engaging, dynamic, user-friendly, and visually appealing online CoP where alumni participants are encouraged to share resources and ideas as well as cascade knowledge and skills gained from virtual programming. The award recipient may also engage U.S. embassies or provide opportunities for stakeholders to participate on the CoP.

The award recipient should plan for CoP engagement throughout the length of the award. The plan should include specific ways which the award recipient will assess the needs of program alumni, U.S. embassies, and current and potential audiences. The plan should include information on types of content and strategies for engagement based on potential needs assessment results. The award recipient must also explain the value added for activities and engagement on the CoP.

The timeline and plan for GOCs, ROCs, MOOCs, Virtual Exchanges, webinars, social media content, and the CoP can be submitted in one overall plan, if desired.

2) Content Development Guidelines

- OERs

At the direction of ECA/A/L, for all OPEN Program categories, the award recipient will create or issue sub-awards to U.S.-based English language professionals and educational institutions through open solicitations for proposals to create OER for English language

teaching and learning. OERs are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and repurposing by others. OERs include full courses, course materials, course modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge. OERs may be promoted by OPEN Program alumni in supporting roles, such as a moderator of a MOOC, a facilitator of a webinar, or as a contributor to the CoP.

The award recipient will be expected to provide ECA/A/L with access to the OERs created during the program at any time during the award. This will allow ECA/A/L to innovatively address additional virtual learning opportunities that may arise. The award and sub-award recipients will collaborate with ECA/A/L and Creative Commons to license all online courses with the most recent CC BY license to ensure the courses and materials developed within the courses of this award will have a significant multiplier effect, be cost-effective, and encourage innovation in the development of new learning materials. As a condition of the FY 2024 OPEN Program award, work (except for computer software source code) created with the support of the award and sub-awards should be licensed under a CC BY license. Some exceptions may apply on a case-by-case basis.

Work that should be licensed in this manner includes new content created using sub-awards; modifications made to pre-existing sub-recipient-owned content using sub-awards; and new works and modifications made to pre-existing works commissioned from third parties using sub-awards. This license will allow subsequent users to copy, adapt, distribute, and transmit the licensed work, and will require users to attribute the work in the manner specified by the award recipient. Notice of the license shall be affixed to the work. For general information on CC BY, please visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>.

- **Accessibility and Section 508 Compliance**
Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (www.section508.gov) requires that federal programs use appropriate services and develop content (web and non-web) that is accessible to all people, including those with visual, physical, cognitive, and auditory disabilities. This law applies to anyone who manages U.S. Department of State's ECA/A/L's programs. The award recipient must be aware of trends in Section 508 compliance for accessibility and be prepared to use appropriate technologies, provide training, and develop a plan for ensuring all print and web versions of documents, PDFs, webpages, images, audio, video, and other multimedia associated with the OPEN Program meet the standards of 508 compliance.
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility**

The U.S. Department of State's ECA/A/L prioritizes Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). The award recipient should demonstrate a commitment to diversity by outlining a plan for recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff, consultants, and academic partners from historically marginalized backgrounds; and providing a safe, equitable, and inclusive work environment.

In addition, the award recipient with ECA/A/L approval should provide training and feedback to ensure that content development for the OPEN Program provides participants overseas with a full understanding of U.S. society, culture, and values by providing diverse representations and perspectives of all Americans including non-mainstream, underrepresented groups from different religions, different sexual orientations, different gender affiliations, and different ethnic backgrounds without offending other cultures and/or presenting biased and stereotypical viewpoint. As much as possible, activities should include collaboration between international participants and U.S.-based English language professionals to encourage deeper cross-cultural awareness. For all activities, the award recipient should be prepared to provide appropriate cultural expectations and establish guidelines for interaction for overseas audiences. Please see section D.9. of the NOFO and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for more information on DEIA.

- **Micro-credentialing Pathways**

In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the recipient organization may create micro-credentialing pathways to engage participants and alumni in further developing their professional skills through higher level training of trainers' courses and other professional development opportunities globally and/or in conjunction with U.S. embassies to train other educators and cascade new knowledge. The recipient organization may provide badging related to participation in webinars, GOCs, ROCs, and/or MOOCs that would create a pathway for participants to receive honors and recognition for participating in multiple opportunities and to receive training to train other teachers. The award recipient may also contract with a badging software company or institutions for services, such as technical assistance, implementation, and on-going maintenance associated with micro-credentialing and pathway building.

- **Data Management**

The award recipient will be responsible for ensuring ongoing assessment of the efficiency of the existing LMS utilized for all online offerings through the OPEN Program to maintain and update the system as necessary. In the event that the FY 2024 award recipient is different from the FY 2023 recipient, the FY 2024 recipient must work with the FY 2023 recipient on systems and data management. If a significant improvement to the program could be made by transferring to a different platform or by making significant changes to the current platform, the award recipient may do so, with

ECA/A/L approval. The LMS must be specifically customized for the OPEN Program and accommodate participants in low-bandwidth contexts, while offering participants access to various collaborative multi-media tools during the courses, such as discussion forums or videos. The LMS should not be tied to any one institution, as the system must be accessible to multiple institutions and individually contracted instructors. This system must be accessible to U.S. embassy and ECA/A/L staff involved in nominating and selecting participants, as well as monitoring the online offerings.

The award recipient will also use, maintain, and update as necessary the existing application and registration portal that allows U.S. embassies to nominate and enroll participants and track participant progress through the OPEN Program. The application and registration portal must remain connected to the LMS. With guidance from ECA/A/L, the award recipient must electronically maintain and regularly update applicant and participant data and protect personally identifiable information (PII) using cybersecure data collection processes. The management and sharing of this data must continuously be updated and improved to meet the reporting and story-telling demands, monitoring and evaluation requirements, and requests of ECA/A/L and U.S. embassy stakeholders. The award recipient should provide technical assistance and periodic trainings (virtual and/or face-to-face) for ECA/A/L and U.S. embassy staff on how to use the system and should strive to build and maintain a system that is intuitive and user friendly.

A.4. Recipient Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

1) Management Responsibilities

- Development and implementation for GOCs, ROCs, MOOCs, and virtual exchanges including revising out-of-date courses and exchanges and updating content through new modalities;
- In coordination with ECA/A/L, assessing U.S. embassies' needs for online English language teaching and learning programming and soliciting, selecting, and revising appropriate courses and exchanges that address those needs,
- Identifying content themes to be developed, in collaboration with ECA/A/L, based on the needs of U.S. embassies and specific regions and countries;
- Managing the RFA process for issuing sub-awards to accredited U.S. higher education institutions and U.S. citizen TESOL experts to deliver online courses and exchanges for EFL teachers or learners overseas;
- In collaboration with ECA/A/L, selecting all sub-awards and contracts;

- Managing the selection, development, and delivery of appropriate online learning courses and exchanges in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) which will be offered to English language educators, other professionals, or learners and for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses as requested by U.S. embassies;
- Issuing sub-awards to accredited U.S. higher education institutions, U.S. non-profit institutions, and U.S. citizen TESOL experts;
- Managing sub-award recipients in the development and delivery of online programming, including ensuring that materials and syllabi are submitted by sub-award recipients by the established deadlines;
- In coordination with ECA/A/L, developing a plan to be implemented with the sub-award recipients for participant placement retention;
- Ensuring that approved ECA/A/L guidance (including eligibility requirements for participants) is followed based on nominations from U.S. embassies;
- Seeking ECA/A/L approval for exceptions to eligibility requirements proposed by RELOs and U.S. embassies;
- Reviewing, analyzing, and approving the curricula, the syllabi, and the materials of proposed courses and exchanges to ensure they meet program guidelines, including Section 508 compliance, OER guidelines, Instructional Design and Online Learning guidelines, innovative and engaging graphic and video design, and TESOL guidelines;
- Communicating and working with U.S. embassies to resolve participant issues, including connectivity, academic level, etc.;
- Periodically conducting a needs analysis in collaboration with ECA/A/L, RELOs, and U.S. embassies for courses, exchanges, webinars, and social media;
- Ensuring that content developed through sub-awards is appropriate for international audiences and provides participants insights into the diversity of U.S. culture, society, and values;
- Recruiting and maintaining a team of appropriate staff with expertise in the field of TESOL, particularly in working with non-native English-speaking teachers, and resolving participant issues, such as limited internet access, limited bandwidth, and limited participant technical skills;
- As requested by ECA/A/L, recruiting and maintaining staff and/or consultants with technical expertise in TESOL, marketing and outreach, DEIA, graphic or video design and development, materials development, systems management, webinar production, social media engagement, applications development, and/or other areas of expertise upon request;
- Seeking approval from ECA/A/L and the assigned Grants Officer for key personnel changes;
- Licensing online content with the most recent CC BY license to ensure that the courses and materials developed with this award will have a significant multiplier

effect, be cost-effective, and encourage innovation in the development of new learning materials;

- When requested by ECA/A/L and/or when deemed necessary for program goals and participant engagement, allowing for exceptions to the CC BY licensing requirement of program content (which may include incorporating any content that has been or will be created by ECA/A/L);
- In collaboration with ECA/A/L, potentially creating micro-credentialing pathways to engage participants and alumni in further developing their professional skills through higher level training of trainers' courses and opportunities globally and/or in conjunction with U.S. embassies to further the educators' engagement by training other educators and professionals and cascading new knowledge;
- If requested by ECA, contracting with providers for services, such as technical assistance, edtech tools, implementation, and on-going maintenance associated with digital badging, micro-credentialing, and learner pathways;

2) Reporting and Documentation Responsibilities

- Developing and implementing a strategic communication plan in close coordination with ECA/A/L;
- Submitting regular program and budget updates to ECA/A/L, as well as required program reports by the established deadlines; providing additional ad hoc reporting as requested and as appropriate;
- Informing and consulting with ECA/A/L about the administration of the program, any program or participant-related problems or deficiencies, and the progress of necessary actions;
- Connecting ECA/A/L and all sub-award recipients, such as U.S. universities and institutions, consultants, technical vendors, and LMS partners to ensure that all sub-awarded recipients recognize their role in implementing a U.S. Department of State-funded program and aligning with the goals and vision of ECA;
- Drafting and finalizing official documentation, e.g. sub-agreements and memoranda of understanding, before disbursing funds to universities, institutions, or individual contracts;
- Tracking the entire sub-award and contractor process, e.g. proposals, official documents, reports, and disbursements in addition to sending reminders about when reports are due and overdue;
- Managing all ECA/A/L funds for OPEN activities, including submitting required grant reports and/or other requested reports to ECA/A/L by established deadlines;
- Ensuring existing ECA/A/L educational materials are integrated into course and exchange materials and syllabi, as appropriate (see <http://americanenglish.state.gov/> and American English social media platforms).

- At ECA/A/L's request, the award recipient will also seek guidance on collaborating with other ECA/A/L programs, such as the English Language Fellow, Specialist, and Virtual Educator Program and the English Access Scholarship Program (formerly the English Access Microscholarship Program);
- Reviewing participant evaluations of courses as well as evaluations of participants by course instructors, and providing ECA/A/L an analysis of the evaluations;
- Working with award recipient staff, sub-award recipients, and individual contractors to ensure that recommendations are implemented based on the evaluations.

3) Data Management and Technical Oversight

- Collaborating with the FY 2023 recipient on systems and data management if the FY 2023 award recipient is different
- Managing, creating, and/or improving information-sharing tools (e.g., the LMS, program database, nomination and reporting portal, CoP, webinars, social media, website, apps, etc.) for the OPEN Program. The information-sharing tools must be easy to access, and updates must be made in a timely manner. Data must be maintained in a way that will enable the recipient to provide ECA/A/L with information on the OPEN Program immediately upon request;
- Ensuring that communications and database information protects PII according to ECA/A/L guidelines;
- Researching, developing, and producing OERs for English language teaching and learning in response to the articulated needs of ECA/A/L; coordinating and supporting the deployment of these resources overseas, including the purchase and shipping of equipment for staff and/or consultants, as necessary; and managing professional development activities to allow educators abroad to effectively use these resources;
- Drafting and clearing all public advertisements, one pagers, newsletters, handouts, webpages, etc. with ECA/A/L before dissemination to ensure their proper identification as a U.S. Department of State initiative and adherence to ECA/A/L guidelines;
- Following established ECA/A/L approved guidelines to create and publish course syllabi, course materials, and materials related to other programming;
- Using, maintaining, and updating as necessary the existing Canvas LMS, which is uniformly utilized for all online course offerings through the OPEN Program or collaborating with ECA/A/L to adopt a new LMS that serves the OPEN Program more effectively;
 - This LMS must accommodate participants in low-bandwidth contexts, while offering participants access to various collaborative multi-media tools during the courses, such as discussion forums or videos. The LMS is customized specifically for OPEN. The LMS should not be tied to any one institution, as

the system must be accessible to multiple institutions and individually contracted instructors. The LMS should include COP for participants and alumni that facilitate the exchange of teaching and learning content and ideas via a global network of OPEN participants. This system must be accessible at all times to U.S. embassy and ECA/A/L staff involved in nominating and selecting participants, as well as monitoring the online courses;

- Using, maintaining, and updating as necessary the existing application and registration mechanism (currently referred to as the portal) that allows U.S. embassies to nominate and enroll participants and track participant progress through the OPEN Program;
- Using, maintaining, and updating as necessary the existing online CoP for the OPEN Program;
- Providing technical assistance and periodic trainings (virtual and/or face-to-face) for ECA/A/L and U.S. embassy staff on how to use all systems, databases, platforms, course materials, etc. related to the OPEN Program.

4) OERs

- Creating or issuing sub-awards or contracts to accredited U.S. higher education institutions and U.S.-citizen TESOL experts through open competitions to create openly accessible online English language teaching and learning tools, which may include MOOCs, webinars, course materials, course modules, CoP, digital libraries, virtual exchanges, and other online methods of learning;
- Seeking approval from ECA/A/L on all sub-awards or contracts to develop or publish materials;
- When requested by ECA/A/L and/or when deemed necessary for program goals and engagement, allowing for exceptions to the CC BY licensing requirement of program content (which may include incorporating any content that has been or will be created by ECA/A/);
- Providing guidance on current trends in open licensing and accessibility as well as technical assistance and periodic trainings (virtual and/or face-to-face) for ECA/A/L staff, U.S. embassy staff, and current and former program participants on 508 compliance, accessibility, licensing and/or how to use OER.

5) Participant Retention

- Submitting a narrative outlining a comprehensive strategy for improving participant retention to maximize course completion rates;
- Submitting a narrative outlining a comprehensive strategy for increasing alumni engagement to maximize participant follow-on and the cascading of information from courses and programming.

6) The CoP

- In collaboration with ECA/A/L, the award recipient will use, maintain, and update the online CoP;
- Strategizing for maximum engagement and quality of user interface for the online CoP;
- Ensuring that the online CoP is mobile-friendly and easily accessible in low-bandwidth contexts;
- Providing technical assistance and periodic trainings (virtual and/or face-to-face) for current and former program participants on how to use the CoP.

7) Social Media

- In collaboration with ECA/A/L, strategizing, planning, and creating content and events, moderating and managing ECA/A/L's flagship social media accounts, such as the American English at State Facebook page, the American English for Educators Facebook page, the American English YouTube channel, and any other social media accounts upon request;
- Reporting on social media statistics and trends and reflecting on successes and lessons learned for future social media strategies, methods, and content creation;
- Researching and investigating other tools and platforms for social media engagement and proposing their use as appropriate;
- Procuring tools and platforms as requested and/or approved by ECA/A/L;
- As requested by ECA/A/L, recruiting and maintaining a number of staff and/or consultants with technical expertise in TESOL, marketing and outreach, DEIA, graphic or video design and development, systems management, webinar production, social media engagement, applications development, and/or other areas of expertise upon request.

8) American English Live Webinars

- In coordination with ECA/A/L, assessing current TESOL trends and U.S. embassy needs to select appropriate webinar series and session topics;
- In collaboration with ECA/A/L, recruiting and selecting U.S. TESOL experts as presenters and delivering appropriate online webinars for a global audience of EFL educators on topics in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL);
- Issuing contracts to qualified U.S. TESOL professionals;
- Managing contract recipients in the development and delivery of American English Live Webinars, including ensuring that materials are submitted by the established deadlines and all content adheres to ECA/A/L approved guidelines;
- Reporting on webinar statistics and trends and reflecting on successes and lessons learned for future webinar production and implementation;
- Researching and investigating other tools and platforms for webinar engagement and proposing their use as appropriate;

- Procuring tools and platforms as requested and/or approved by ECA/A/L;
- As requested by ECA/A/L, creating production and implementation plans for webinars and other virtual events related to online courses (such as graduation ceremonies) or other ECA/A/L materials or social media initiatives, themes, or plans.

9) The American English Application:

- If requested by ECA/A/L, collaborating with ECA/A/L to develop an American English application (app), including options for obtaining an appropriate domain name, hosting of application, design, development and testing;
- Administering an open competition for issuing a contract under the award or a sub-award to an app development company, to design, develop, and test a new American English app;
- Issuing a sub-award(s) or contract to a selected application development company to host, design, develop, and test a new American English app;
- In collaboration with ECA/A/L and the sub-awarded recipient, maintaining and updating as necessary the American English app throughout the period of performance.

10) Virtual Exchanges

- Upon request, collaborating with ECA/A/L to conduct virtual exchanges or issue a sub-award(s) to a U.S. educational institution or non-profit institution to conduct virtual exchanges for participants selected by U.S. embassies and/or ECA/A/L;
- Managing the RFAs process for issuing sub-awards to accredited U.S. higher education institutions and non-profit institutions to deliver virtual exchanges;
- Working with post to manage participant nomination process;
- Monitoring the implementation of virtual exchanges;
- Serving as point-of-contact with ECA/A/L, RELOs, and posts;
- Providing support to the sub-awardee;
- Providing and managing the LMS;
- Reviewing program schedules and materials;
- Communicating and working with U.S. embassies to resolve participant issues, including connectivity, technical ability, etc.;
- Periodically conducting a needs analysis in collaboration with ECA/A/L, RELOs, and U.S. embassies for virtual exchanges;
- Ensuring that the exchanges developed through sub-awards include appropriate content that provides participants insights into U.S. culture, society, and values.

11) Outreach, Conference, and TESOL Convention involvement:

- In collaboration with ECA/A/L, strategizing, organizing, and arranging for award recipient participation (whether in-person or virtually) in domestic or international conferences related to TESOL and other relevant conferences to enhance award recipient staff professional development, promote the OPEN

program to U.S. universities and institutions, support alumni participation, recruit U.S. institutional applications for new online projects, and recruit U.S. TESOL professionals for social media, content development, and webinar production;

- Funding staff travel as requested by ECA/A/L to in-person ECA and partner meetings, relevant conferences, and current U.S. partner institutions for collaboration, presentations, site visits, and outreach purposes.

A.5. Substantial Involvement:

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

1) ECA/A/L

- Grant Management and Program Administration Responsibilities:
 - Strategizing with the award recipient, RELOs, and U.S. embassies to develop and approve themes based on the needs of U.S. embassies, specific regions, and countries for social media, GOCs, ROCs, MOOCs, and virtual exchanges;
 - Determining program participant allocations for each region, communicating with RELOs and U.S. embassies to allocate participant slots for courses and exchanges and approving strategies for participant placement and retention for GOCs, ROCs, and virtual exchanges;
 - Collaborating on and approving the selection criteria, topics, academic level, revisions, and final RFAs to solicit appropriate courses or virtual exchanges through sub-awards from U.S. academic institutions, educational non-profit institutions, and/or TESOL professional associations;
 - Selecting and approving consultants for webinars, Teachers' Corner, and social media as well as volunteer alumni leaders on social media
 - Collaborating on sub-award recipient selections, program policies and implementation practices for following OER licensing, DEIA guidelines, and Section 508 compliance for accessibility;
 - Working with the award recipient to identify the need for consultants and staff to be hired by the award recipient to create, curate, and copy edit content for publication and social media purposes.
 - Collaborating with the award recipient to plan for outreach travel and event participation, including virtual events, visits to in-person conferences, current or prospective institutional partners, and educational technology firms.
- Technical Oversight Requirements:
 - Working with the award recipient to select technical services, modernize data management system(s) and platforms, adopt software, and/or obtain

educational technology tools that enhance capacity to develop content for OER licensing, Section 508 compliance, DEIA and/or U.S. Department of State policy goals;

- Ensuring that policies and implementation practices to license online content with the most current OER licensing so that the courses and materials developed with this award (except for computer software source code) will have a significant multiplier effect, be cost-effective, and encourage innovation in the development of new learning materials and requesting exceptions to the CC BY licensing policy when appropriate;
- Approving data management system(s), LMS(s), and CoP platforms, coordinating with the recipient to ensure systems are customized for the OPEN Program and meet accessibility and reporting needs of ECA/A/L and U.S. embassies and collaborating with the award recipient on design, development, training, and necessary updates to systems;
- Approving the recipient organization's open competition for and issuing of a contract under the award or sub-award to an application development company to design, develop, and test a new American English application and collaborating with the award recipient on the design, development, training, and necessary updates to an American English application if developed;

2) U.S. Embassies

U.S. embassies are responsible for managing the OPEN Program in-country:

- Communicating priorities to ECA/A/L and the award recipient for course and exchange themes and writing proposals for GOCs, ROCs, MOOCs, and virtual exchanges;
- Recruiting, identifying, selecting, nominating, and tracking participants for GOCs; ROCs; and virtual exchanges through the OPEN Program nomination portal (participant nomination and tracking system);
- Promoting and participating in social media, webinars, MOOCs, OPEN alumni events on the CoP, and other activities, if conducted, as desired and relevant to potential participants in the region;
- Planning publications and presentations, alumni conferences and meetings, certificate issuing and ceremonies, and regional social media engagement to cascade participants' knowledge if appropriate;

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 2024

Approximate Total Funding: \$6,000,000, pending the availability of funds

Approximate Number of Awards: 1

Approximate Average Award: \$6,000,000, pending the availability of funds.

Minimum “Floor” of Award: \$5,800,000, pending the availability of funds.

Maximum “Ceiling” of Award: \$6,000,000, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Award Date: September 15, 2024, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Project Completion Date: September 14, 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 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 approximately \$6,000,000, 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 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 a SF-424, executive summary, proposal narrative, budget (SF 424A), detailed budget, and budget narrative.

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

All organizations must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov. **Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.** Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

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

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

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

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

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

- 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://afsism.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)
 - E1.1.17: Percent of foreign participants with more favorable opinions of the American people (core indicator)
 - E1.1.18: Percent of foreign participants indicating an increase in understanding of United States culture and values (core indicator)
- 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)
 - o Sub-Objective 3.1: Alumni subscribe to platforms for resources and information-sharing
 - E3.1.02: Percent of participants who learned about new resources
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries
 - E4.0.01: Percent of participants reporting increases in their job skills as a result of their program participation
 - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation
 - 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)
 - E4.1.05: Number of participants in programs with a media literacy component
 - E4.1.07: Number of instruction methodology trainings implemented
 - E4.1.14: Number of virtual exchange (VE) programs
 - E4.1.15: Number of participants in virtual exchange (VE) programs
- o Sub-Objective 4.2: Increase ability of participants to recognize and counter disinformation
 - E4.2.01: Percent of participants that report increased ability to counter disinformation
- 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

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. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

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: **Thursday, May 30, 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 Public Diplomacy sections overseas, State Department regional bureaus, or other State Department offices, as appropriate. All reviewers, including the ECA grant panels will review any eligible proposals based on the criteria below.

Recommended proposals will be reviewed for compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines, and assessed for risk. Final funding decisions are made by the 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.) **Program planning:** 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.

- 2.) **Ability to achieve program objectives:** Proposals should demonstrate how your institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. The objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible.
- 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.) **Institutional Capacity:** Proposals should include the necessary personnel and institutional resources to achieve the program results.
- 5.) **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.
- 6.) **Cost-effectiveness:** Proposals should keep the overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate.
- 7.) **Area Expertise:** Proposals should include staff with TESOL experience.

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.

Award recipients will be required to present findings from their data collection efforts 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.

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Jamila Barton, U.S. Department of State, Office of English Language Programs, ECA/A/L, 202-632-9268, BartonJK@state.gov or Chris McDonnell, U.S. Department of State, Office of English Language Programs, ECA/A/L, 202-632-9270, McDonnellCP@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.

Lee Satterfield
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

March 15, 2024