

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

### FY 2025 Youth Ambassadors Europe (YA-EUR) Program Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017492 Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued by the Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) for the FY 2025 Youth Ambassadors Europe (YA-EUR) program. Your proposal must conform to the solicitation, the guidelines stated in this document, and the standard Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Any application not adhering to the conditions set forth herein may be deemed technically ineligible. These guidelines are specific to the program mentioned above and are IN ADDITION TO the guidelines outlined in the PSI. If there is a perceived disparity between documents, the NOFO solicitation should be the dominant reference.

#### I. STATEMENT OF WORK

ECA and the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. embassy in Russia (here after referred to as post) are supporting the participation of youth in an intensive, substantive four-week exchange program in the United States. Explored through a lens of science and technology, the exchange activities should introduce the participants to a comprehensive survey of the program themes of civic engagement and leadership development. Activities should focus on building their knowledge and skill levels in these areas. The program should include workshops, community service activities, meetings with community leaders, and discussion groups and provide participants opportunities for substantive interaction with each other and their American peers.

#### **Recipient Responsibilities:**

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

##### 1) Recruitment, Screening, and Selection:

- a) Conduct open recruitment and competitive, merit-based selection of youth participants, in close consultation with ECA and post. Provide ECA with all publicity materials for approval.
- b) Develop, in coordination with ECA and post, a transparent interview plan and formal process for selection that includes a consistent scoring mechanism and clearly identified evaluation criteria.
- c) Develop web-based applications for participants in consultation with, and approval by, ECA and post.
- d) Administer an effective English language screening process, as appropriate.
- e) Recommend the final participants and alternates for approval. No invitations may be issued without ECA and post clearance.

##### 2) Preparation:

- a) Coordinate with participants before the program to provide them with program information, pre-departure materials, and to gather information about their specific interests.
- b) Collect medical information from the participants and ensure that each participant has the necessary health documents for the program.
- c) Facilitate the passport and J-1 visa application process, in collaboration with ECA and post, for the foreign participants before the beginning of travel to the United States. This includes coordinating, and budgeting for, travel for visa interviews.
- d) Identify an individual to serve as Alternate Responsible Officer to issue DS-2019 forms. All foreign participants will travel on a U.S. Government designation for the J Exchange Visitor Program with ECA as the sponsor. ECA can provide training for that individual, if necessary.
- e) Enroll foreign participants in ECA's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) health benefits plan for the duration of the exchange and assist with claims as necessary. ECA can provide training for this task, if necessary.
- f) Prepare emergency contact information cards for all participants. Participants must receive cards prior to traveling to the United States.
- g) Make all round-trip international and domestic travel arrangements for participants (complying with the Fly America Act). Provide assistance for participants as they navigate airports and travel (as needed).
- h) Arrange for ground transportation, group meals, and the disbursement of any incidental funds.
- i) Make appropriate accommodations and arrangements for participants' religious observances and dietary restrictions, as needed (e.g., allotting time for prayer or services, providing special meals, etc.).
- j) Hire and train staff, as needed, to accompany participants during the exchange period. Criminal background checks, including a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry, must be conducted for all program staff and for new staff prior to hiring.
- k) In collaboration with ECA, and post, design and present pre-departure orientation information for participants, including general and program-specific information.
- l) Make housing arrangements for all participants and provide a list of all housing accommodations to ECA. Monitor housing arrangements to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of participants.
- m) Carefully recruit, screen, and select local host families to offer homestays (lodging and meals) to the participants for most of the exchange period. Criminal background checks, including a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry, must be conducted for members of host families (and others living in the home) who are 18 years or older.
- n) Orient staff and those participating from the U.S. host communities, including American peers and host families, to the goals of the program and to the cultures and sensitivities of the exchange visitors.

### 3) Exchange Activities:

- a) Plan and implement four weeks of exchange activities that are designed to develop the participants' knowledge and skill base in civic engagement and leadership development through a lens of science and technology. The exchanges should include creative and interactive activities, practical experiences, and other hands-on opportunities that provide a substantive experience on the specified program themes. Activities should be school and community-based, as appropriate to the program. Exchanges must involve as much sustained interaction with U.S. peers as possible.
- b) Provide ECA with a calendar of exchange activities for final approval.
- c) Conduct a welcome orientation for participants upon their arrival in the United States to review program goals, objectives, and expectations.
- d) The program should be somewhat flexible, as the proposed plans may need to be adjusted once the award has been made.
- e) Recruit peers from the United States to be engaged in activities with the exchange participants.
- f) Arrange appropriate community, cultural, social, and civic activities. Ensure that the range of program activities provides a balanced view of the social and political spectrum.
- g) Engage participants in at least two community service activities during the exchange. The program should provide context for the participants – a discussion of community service/volunteerism in the United States, identifying community needs, volunteerism, charitable giving, etc. – and a debriefing so that the service activity is not an isolated event and will help participants apply the experience at home.
- h) Develop a plan to monitor the participants' safety and well-being during the exchange and to create opportunities for participants to share potential issues and resolve them promptly.
- i) Provide day-to-day monitoring of the participants' well-being, taking steps to avoid and/or handle, in a timely manner, any misunderstandings or adjustment issues that may arise. The award recipient will be required to provide proper staff supervision to ensure that the youth have a safe, and pedagogically rich, program. Staff will assist the youth with cultural adjustments, provide societal context to enhance learning, and counsel students as needed. Award recipients must immediately inform ECA about any health or safety issues affecting program participants as they arise.
- j) Provide a closing session to summarize exchange activities, prepare participants for their return home, and plan for their future as Youth Ambassadors alumni.
- k) Include a substantive visit to Washington, DC.

### 4) Follow-on Activities:

- a) Plan, organize, and manage, in close collaboration with post, follow-on activities in the participants' home communities by facilitating continued engagement among the participants; advising and supporting them in the implementation of community service

projects; and offering opportunities to reinforce the ideas, values and skills learned during the exchange. Exchange participants should return home from the exchange prepared to conduct projects that serve a need in their schools or communities. Follow-on activities may include a virtual component. Applicants should propose a robust plan to assist the participants in developing and carrying out follow-on projects with maximum positive effect to the community.

- b) In coordination with alumni coordinators at post and ECA's alumni team, connect newly returned program participants with alumni from previous program years, the wider Youth Ambassadors network, and from other U.S. Government sponsored programs (where possible). These connections may help participants reintegrate into their home communities post-exchange as well as build and strengthen the alumni network.

5) Performance Monitoring and Evaluation:

- a) Design a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) that outlines plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions. Please see section C.5. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation of the NOFO for more information.

5) Administrative:

- a) Work in consultation with ECA and post on the program implementation, providing timely progress reports to ECA and post, and complying with financial and program reporting requirements, and administration priorities and policy directives.
- b) Provide all printed or web-based program materials, including applications, program-wide communications with post, and publicity materials to ECA for approval.
- c) Accommodate ECA site visit requests.
- d) Manage all financial aspects of the program.
- e) Participate in regular program reviews with the ECA program officer to assess program implementation and identify matters of concern. The award recipient should provide the ECA program officer brief monthly email updates outlining general programmatic activities conducted during the past month and anticipated programmatic activities to be conducted the following month.
- f) Prepare and share program and/or alumnae highlights and success stories in a timely fashion with the ECA program officer and post.
- g) Submit proposed changes to staffing plans and/or key personnel to the ECA program and grants officers for approval.
- h) Respond fully and promptly to requests for program information from the ECA program office.
- i) Inform, and consult with, ECA about any program or participant problems, emergencies, or other issues, as well as the progress of necessary corrective action.

## II. PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

**ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Additionally, ECA reserves the right to adjust countries within the region of the award should conditions change in a partner country and/or if other countries are identified as alternatives in response to Department priorities. Please note that any country shifts after the award is issued would require additional ECA approval, and an amendment to the award.**

### Partner Organizations and/or Affiliates:

Applicants must demonstrate organizational capacity to recruit and select participants for the program and provide follow-on activities. This capacity may take many forms such as a branch office of the U.S. applicant organization, a non-governmental partner organization, or other affiliates/consultants with demonstrated experience in educational exchange that can coordinate the program nationally. The award recipient will be responsible for any subaward recipients activities under the cooperative agreement, both programmatically and financially. The cooperative agreement requires that the award recipient be able to manage the program in its entirety, with little reliance on ECA and post for support.

### Recruitment and Selection:

Plans for participant recruitment, selection, and interviews should be closely coordinated with, and approved by, the ECA program office and post to ensure that these processes are conducted fairly, efficiently, and reach target audiences. Preference should be given to individuals who have not previously traveled to the United States, especially on a U.S. government-sponsored program. Once the cooperative agreement is awarded, the award recipient must consult with ECA and post to review their participant recruitment plans in detail, identify any specific selection criteria, and the screening and selection process.

Pre-Departure Information: The award recipient, in collaboration with ECA and post, will design and convey pre-departure information for all participants before they leave for the United States. This should include a general political, historical, educational, and cultural introduction to the United States; information on key program objectives, concepts, themes, and expectations; preparations for homestays; and intercultural training and teambuilding exercises. All participants must participate in planned activities to receive programmatic information in advance of their travel.

The award recipient should invite relevant embassy personnel to engage with participants, when possible, so that participants are fully cognizant of the U.S. Government's support and sponsorship of the program.

Pre-Program Travel: Applicants should describe in detail how they will budget, arrange,

manage, and provide funds for any required in-country travel (overseas), or third-country travel, which could include, but is not limited to travel for visa interviews, pre-departure orientations, and international departure, as needed.

International travel: The applicant should detail its plan for making the participants' international travel (in compliance with the Fly America Act), in consultation with post and include appropriate costs in the budget.

The award recipient will identify and provide travel support for participants on all legs of the international flights to and from the site of program activity in the United States. Travel expenses such as airline tickets, and per diem and lodging for up to two days should be included within proposal budgets.

Welcome Orientation: The award recipient should design and conduct a welcome orientation for the participants to introduce them to their host communities and American peers, and to prepare them for the activities ahead. The orientation should include a general political, historical, educational, and cultural introduction to their host communities and/or United States, a review of the objectives and themes of the program, and practical and administrative information.

Other Logistics: The award recipient will manage all logistical arrangements, including U.S. domestic travel, ground transportation, accommodations, group meals, and disbursement of pocket money.

U.S. Exchange Activities: The award recipient will design, plan, and implement approximately four weeks of exchange activities that provide a creative and substantive program that develops the participants' knowledge and skill base in specified themes, as well as a deeper understanding of the American people, culture, and traditions. The program should consist primarily of interactive activities, practical experiences, and other opportunities that provide an introduction to U.S.-based civic, cultural, and educational institutions. Activities should use hands-on methods to help the participants learn about the fundamentals of civil society and community engagement, build their leadership skills, and develop similar activities for their peers back home. Many of these should be planned in conjunction with participation in school and community activities (when possible) in a way that is educational both for the exchange participants and their hosts/peers. Exchange participants should not attend classes in a school for more than a few days. All programming should include interaction with American peers and mentors whenever possible. ECA urges applicants to present innovative, resourceful, and effective programming ideas. Applicants should justify their choices by explaining how their program plan will meet the stated goals.

The exchange should include a visit to Washington, DC, at any point in the exchange. This time should include a meeting with U.S. Department of State representatives (where possible).

The program should include a workshop just prior to the participants' departure that focuses on summarizing the experience and preparing to return home. Throughout the program the participants should be encouraged, and helped, to develop projects to implement at home to multiply the impact of the program. The ideas and plans should come from the participants, but the project staff should be prepared to assist the participants in developing these plans during the U.S.-based exchange and during a follow-on period.

Sites: In addition to visiting Washington, DC, the participants should spend time in one or two locations to foster bonds between American communities and exchange participants. Applicant organizations should describe the rationale for their location selections. ECA encourages applicants to consider proximity to sites of historical or cultural interest, and access to organizations that can further program learning objectives.

Housing Accommodations: In the United States, homestays with local families should be arranged for most of the exchange period to provide participants sufficient time to become familiar with life in an American home. A dormitory, hotel, or other housing with appropriate program support is an acceptable arrangement for other short segments of the program, such as the Washington, DC visit.

The award recipient must have a clear and detailed host family recruitment, screening, and selection process. Screening must include a visit to the home to meet all members of the household to ensure that the host family can provide a comfortable and nurturing home environment. The award recipient must provide the families an orientation prior to their exchange participants' arrival, that emphasizes the program's goals, detailed information on the exchange program, the parameters of their participation, duties and obligations, and information on cultural differences and practices.

Exchange participants should be afforded private space in the home. While exchange participants may share a room with someone of a similar age and the same gender, they must have their own bed. Participants may be placed with host families as singles or in pairs. Host families need to have adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations, and adequate/meaningful time to spend with the participants.

Participant Monitoring: The award recipient will develop and implement a detailed plan to monitor the participants' well-being, safety, and security during all stages of the program.

A competitive monitoring plan should include the following:

- a) The information provided in pre-departure materials on safety and the avenues for participants to communicate concerns to staff.
- b) The staff supervision plan for when the participants are in hotels and/or dormitories.
- c) Screening of host families, including criminal background checks for all household

members over the age of 18.

- d) The monitoring of participants while they are in homestays.
- e) A comprehensive emergency action plan.

The award recipient will be required to provide proper supervision to ensure that the program participants have safe and enriching programs. Staff will assist participants with cultural adjustments, provide societal context to enhance learning, and counsel participants as needed.

Criminal background checks, including a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry, must be conducted for all program staff who will have contact with participants.

Award recipients must immediately inform the ECA program officer and post about any significant health or safety issues affecting program participants **as they arise**. Regardless of the level of severity, or how easily it can be resolved, it is essential that the ECA program officer be notified for awareness.

Participants must be given emergency contact information cards prior to their arrival in the United States.

Follow-on Activities: As mentioned previously, participants should return home from the exchange prepared to implement projects that serve a need in their schools or communities.

The award recipient should design activities for alumni, and support and mentor the participants in their follow-on project implementation. This may include providing materials, serving as a resource or advisor, and working with post and alumni to help nurture on-going contact with the participants. ECA seeks creative ideas to ensure that alumni effectively carry out their follow-on projects and remain engaged in activities, particularly ideas that multiply the program's outcomes.

Alumni programming in the form of seminars, newsletters, and online platforms serves to maximize and extend the exchange program's benefits. Follow-on plans should take into account that Internet access may be limited in some areas. Structured alumni reunion meetings may be incorporated into follow-on activities.

The award recipient should communicate and consult with ECA and post prior to organizing in-person or virtual alumni events to learn of any current considerations/sensitives and to offer opportunities for participation, when and where feasible. The award recipient should be prepared to provide the ECA program officer and post with detailed summaries of alumni activities/events in a timely fashion (no later than two weeks) following a scheduled activity/event. Summaries should include the who, what, where, when, and why details, as well as highlight the specific outcomes and notable successes from the activity/event.

Applicant organizations should incorporate ECA alumni initiatives into their plans and communications for alumni programming, including, but not limited to, the online community on the International Exchange Alumni website ([alumni.state.gov](http://alumni.state.gov)), connecting with the wider Youth Ambassadors program alumni networks, and opportunities offered by the U.S. Department of State, such as the [Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund \(AEIF\)](#) or U.S. embassy hosted events. Applicants should show how they will ensure that alumni understand the role and relationship of the program with the U.S. Government and that they will follow ECA communications guidance for crediting the U.S. Department of State (as applicable).

All alumni contact information gathered by the award recipients on behalf of this program must be made available to the Department of State. Please refer to the PSI for additional guidance.

Communication Strategy: Competitive proposals will present a communications plan for keeping ECA and post informed of program progress, including programmatic and/or participant concerns/issues, as well as alumni activities and success stories.

Participant Highlights and Success Stories: Participant and alumni experience highlights are essential to demonstrating the power and significance of international exchange programs. The ECA Program Office therefore expects award recipients to prepare and share exchange program highlights by email with the ECA program officer and relevant post while participants are in the United States, as well as share alumni experience highlights and success stories in a timely fashion (as they occur) post-exchange.

Digital Presence: The award recipient will coordinate digital engagement for the program in coordination with ECA and in accordance with ECA's communications and social media guidelines to ensure media is appropriate for the program's level of sensitivity and maintains the online security of those involved.

Other notes: The award recipient is responsible for all components of the program outlined in this document. ECA requires the recipient organization to communicate with ECA and post on a regular basis about program activities, including participant and host family recruitment and selection, pre-departure and welcome orientations, publicity, and follow-on activities. The recipient also must inform the ECA program officer about progress at each stage of the project's implementation in a timely fashion and must obtain approval of any significant program changes in advance of implementation. The Bureau will retain copyright use of and be allowed to distribute materials related to this program as it sees fit.

### **III. PROPOSAL CONTENTS**

Applicants should submit a complete and thorough proposal describing the program in a convincing and comprehensive manner. Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation

and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

Proposals should address succinctly, but completely, the elements described below and must follow all format requirements.

**NOTE:** Proposals submitted through Grants.gov may only be submitted in the following formats:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) - 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>.
- ASCII Text
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images)

Proposals should include the following items. All documents should be appropriately and clearly titled.

**Online Forms:**

- SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance"
- SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs
- SF-424B, "Assurances – Non-Construction Programs," (only required for organizations if its representations and certifications have not been completed in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). If an organization is exempt from registering in SAM.gov, then it would still need to provide the form as part of its application.)
- Include other attachments, if applicable, such as the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), form 990 Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax, SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only required for organizations that engage in lobbying activities), etc.

**Program Narrative:**

Executive Summary (One page)

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

- 1) Name of organization/participating institutions
- 2) Identification of the program (FY2025 YA-EUR)
- 3) Beginning and ending dates of the program
- 4) Proposed theme
- 5) Nature of activity
- 6) Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-

sharing from applicant and other sources

- 7) Scope and Goals
  - a. Number and description of participants
  - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
  - c. Fields covered
  - d. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

#### Narrative

In no more than 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages (with one-inch margins, size 12 font), provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below. In the narrative, applicants should not only describe major programs activities but also explain and justify their programmatic choices.

- 1) Vision (objectives, goals, benefits)
- 2) Program and Follow-on Activities: In addition to describing the components of the exchange and how they relate to program themes, a detailed outline of the approximately three-week exchange should be included as an appendix.
- 3) Travel, Housing, and Other Logistics
- 4) Participant Monitoring Plan
- 5) Program Performance Monitoring
- 6) Institutional Capacity and Project Management
- 7) Work Plan/Schedule: Outline the phases of the project planning and implementation for the entire award period. Provide a draft schedule of daily activities of the exchanges in an appendix.

#### **Additional Information to be Submitted:**

- 1) Detailed Budget in Microsoft Excel format
  - a. The level of funding available for FY 2025 is \$360,000, pending the availability of funds.
  - b. The budget must include a participant support line of at least \$6,000 to be used to accommodate participants who may require extra support to fully participate in the program including, but not limited to, those with disabilities or financial hardship.

The available funding may be used for participant support and non-participant support costs necessary to implement the program as described in this solicitation. Please submit a comprehensive line-item budget, as stated in the PSI. An explanatory budget narrative must be included and should elaborate on the detailed budget (e.g., how costs were calculated) not simply repeat with words what is stated numerically in the budget. The budget narrative is the place to communicate to ECA any information that might not be readily apparent in the budget, such as to help explain the reasonableness of costs.

**Allowable costs may include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Staff salaries and benefits
- Staff travel
- Application and educational materials
- Participant travel (international, domestic, ground transportation, passport, and visa fees)
- Travel support costs
- Orientations
- Cultural and social activities
- Meeting costs
- Lodging, when not in homestays
- Food (primarily group meals)
- Follow-on activities (including alumni events/activities that bring Youth Ambassadors together with other ECA program alumni for networking and mentorships)
- Participant support (to be used to accommodate participants who may require extra support to fully participate in the program, including, but not limited to, those with disabilities or financial hardship)
- Program performance monitoring and evaluation
- Participant stipends for incidental expenses
- Other justifiable expenses directly related to supporting program activities

ECA urges applicants to keep costs as low and reasonable as possible. ECA strongly encourages cost-sharing contributions from the applicant and other sources.

Please note that there are no fees for the J-1 visas that foreign participants will use to enter the United States. Applicants should budget for foreign program participants to travel to the applicable U.S. embassy for visa interviews and should budget to cover the costs associated with participants obtaining passports, if necessary.

Exchange participants will be enrolled by the recipient in ECA's ASPE. This cost of the ASPE coverage does not need to be included in the budget. More information on ASPE is available at [USDOS | Seven Corners Government Solutions](#).

**Please refer to the PSI for allowable costs and complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.**

2) Schedule of exchange activities

3) Letters of endorsement

Include pledges to participate in the program's implementation from significant partner organizations and any receiving a sub-award. Letters from elected officials are generally not

advised.

4) Resumes and CVs

Resumes of all staff should be included in the submission. *No one resume should exceed two pages.*

5) First Time Applicant Attachments, **if applicable** (please see PSI)

Please limit appendices to documents that are directly relevant to the program and better inform its design.

**IV. APPLICATION SUBMISSION**

The solicitation document indicates the date the complete proposal is due and the manner in which proposals must be submitted. **There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this deadline. For further information regarding this program, contact Program Officer Gretchen Wietmarschen in the Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division at (202) 826-4284 or [wietmarschengm@state.gov](mailto:wietmarschengm@state.gov).**

**(END)**