

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. EMBASSY SOFIA, PUBLIC DIPLOMACY SECTION
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

Funding Opportunity Title: U.S. Embassy Sofia PDS Annual Program Statement
Funding Opportunity Number: PDS-APS-FY23-01
Deadline for Applications: August 1, 2023
CFDA Number: 19.040 – Public Diplomacy Programs
Total Amount Available: \$350,000.00
Maximum for Each Award: \$25,000.00

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Embassy Sofia Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) of the U.S. Department of State is pleased to announce that funding is available through its Public Diplomacy Small Grants Program. This is an Annual Program Statement, outlining our funding priorities, the strategic themes we focus on, and the procedures for submitting requests for funding. Please carefully follow all instructions below.

Purpose of Small Grants:

PDS Sofia invites proposals for programs that **strengthen people-to-people ties between the United States and Bulgaria** through cultural and exchange programming that highlights shared values and promotes bilateral cooperation. All programs must include an American cultural element, or connection with American expert/s, organization/s, or institution/s in a specific field that will promote increased understanding of U.S. policy and perspectives.

Examples of PDS Small Grants Program programs include, but are not limited to:

- Academic and professional seminars, conferences, and speaker programs;
- Artistic and cultural workshops, joint performances, and exhibitions featuring participants from the United States;
- Cultural heritage conservation and preservation programs;
- Professional and academic exchanges and training programs;

Priority Program Areas:

- Strengthen governance, transparency, and rule of law to foster democratic norms, economic development, energy diversification, and security stability.
- Build media literacy and resilience among the Bulgarian public against disinformation.
- Promote the development of a robust independent media and civil society, including through the promotion of civic activism and volunteerism.
- Promote activities that highlight the social and cultural connections between the United States and Bulgaria.
- Protect and preserve Bulgarian cultural heritage.

- Advance the socioeconomic inclusion of historically underserved and/or marginalized communities, including women, Roma and other minority groups, LGBTQI+ individuals, migrant populations, and disadvantaged youth.
- Promote education and skills-building in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and environmental / clean energy sectors.
- Increase cultural understanding and connectivity between the people of Bulgaria and North Macedonia.

Participants and Audiences:

Audiences, which will vary by program and focus, include but are not limited to: students (at all levels), academics and think-tanks, government officials (at all levels), journalists and media professionals, entrepreneurs, artists, musicians, and various underserved populations. While not required, we encourage grantees to include components that reach audiences outside of Sofia, in regions with less exposure to the United States, including Northwest and Southeast Bulgaria and the Black Sea coast.

The following types of programs are not eligible for funding:

- Programs relating to partisan political activity;
- Charitable or development activities;
- Construction programs;
- Programs that support specific religious activities;
- Fund-raising campaigns;
- Lobbying for specific legislation or programs;
- Scientific research;
- Programs intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the organization;
- Programs that duplicate existing programs; or
- For-profit programs

Authorizing legislation, type and year of funding:

Funding authority rests in the Smith-Mundt Act and the Fulbright-Hays Act. The source of funding is FY22/23 Public Diplomacy Funding.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: 1 to 12 months

Number of awards anticipated: 30 awards (dependent on amounts)

Award amounts: award amounts may range from a minimum of \$500 to a maximum of \$25,000

Total available funding: \$350,000.00

Type of Funding: Fiscal Year 22/23 Public Diplomacy Funding

Anticipated program start date: October 30, 2022

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant or Fixed Amount Award.

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should preferably be completed in 12 months or less.

PDS Sofia will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

The Public Diplomacy Section encourages applications from the United States, Bulgaria, or other European countries:

- Registered not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations with programming experience
- Individuals
- Non-profit or governmental educational institutions
- Governmental institutions

For-profit or commercial entities are not eligible to apply.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing is not required.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

Applicants are encouraged to only submit one application per priority program area in a given funding cycle.

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 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Application Package

Application forms required below are available at:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html>

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Content of Application

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars
- All pages are numbered
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

The following documents are **required**:

1. Mandatory application forms:

- [SF-424 \(Application for Federal Assistance - organizations\)](#) – or –
- [SF-424-I \(Application for Federal Assistance - individuals\)](#)
- [SF-424A \(Budget Information for Non-Construction programs\)](#)
- [SF-424B \(Assurances for Non-Construction programs\)](#) (*note: the SF-424B is only required for individuals and for organizations not registered in SAM.gov*)

Please note that in order to be able to view and fill in the required forms, you need to download the files onto your computer, right-click the document and select Open with Adobe. If you still get a message “*The document you are trying to load requires Adobe Reader 8 or higher*”, then select “*Enable all features*” in the upper right-hand corner of the screen.

2. Summary Page: Cover sheet stating the applicant name and organization, proposal date, program title, program period proposed start and end date, and brief purpose of the program.

3. Proposal (10 pages maximum): The proposal should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

- **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Introduction to the Organization or Individual applying:** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program, including information on all previous grants from the U.S. Embassy and/or U.S. government agencies.
- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed
- **Program Goals and Objectives:** The “goals” describe what the program is intended to achieve. What aspect of the relationship between the United States and Bulgaria will be improved? The “objectives” refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be specific, achievable, and measurable. Describe the target audiences.
- **Program Activities:** Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Program Methods and Design:** A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal.
- **Proposed Program Schedule:** The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **Key Personnel:** Names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. What proportion of their time will be used in support of this program?
- **Program Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees.
- **Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** This is an important part of successful grants. Throughout the timeframe of the grant, how will the activities be monitored to ensure they are happening in a timely manner, and how will the program be evaluated to make sure it is meeting the goals of the grant?
- **Future Funding or Sustainability:** Applicant’s plan for continuing the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable.

4. Budget Justification Narrative: After filling out the SF-424A Budget (above), use a separate sheet of paper or excel spreadsheet to describe each of the budget expenses in detail. See section *H. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions* below for further information.

5. Suggested Attachments

- 1-page CV or resume of key personnel who are proposed for the program
- Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner
- Official permission letters, if required for program activities
- Verification of the non-profit registration
- Screenshot of active registration in SAM.gov

3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Required Registrations:

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration with the SAM.gov. 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.

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.

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.

- 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.
- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- **Please note that as of November 2022 and February 2022 respectively, organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code or CAGE code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.** If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove a CAGE or NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket (“incident”) with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at www.fsd.gov using the following language: “I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain a CAGE or NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated.”

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoD in addition to Department of State should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:

NCAGE Homepage:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx>

NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):

Exemptions

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if:

- An applicant’s identity must be protected due to potential endangerment of their mission, their organization’s status, their employees, or individuals being served by the applicant.
- For an applicant, if the Federal awarding agency makes a determination that there are exigent circumstances that prohibit the applicant from receiving a unique entity identifier and completing SAM registration prior to receiving a Federal award. In these instances, Federal awarding agencies must require the recipient to obtain a unique entity identifier and complete SAM registration within 30 days of the Federal award date.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Applications may be submitted for consideration at any time before the closing date of August 1, 2023. No applications will be accepted after August 1, 2023.

5. Funding Restrictions

Funding cannot be spent for political purpose or support actions that are contradictory to the official position of the State Department.

Award funds cannot be used for construction and real property acquisitions, vehicle purchases, alcohol, etc. A non-exhaustive lists of prohibited costs includes the following:

Costs of entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and social activities and any associated costs are unallowable, except where specific costs that might otherwise be considered entertainment have a programmatic purpose and are authorized either in the approved budget for the Federal award or with prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency.

Costs of organized fund raising, including financial campaigns, endowment drives, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions are unallowable.

Costs of goods or services for personal use of the non-Federal entity's employees are unallowable regardless of whether the cost is reported as taxable income to the employees.

Costs for advertising and public relations, except when solely for program outreach and other specific purposes necessary to meet the requirements of the Federal award.

Costs incurred by advisory councils or committees are unallowable.

Fines, penalties, damages and other settlements.

Costs of alcoholic beverages are unallowable.

6. Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted by email to SofiaGrants@state.gov
Please do not/not submit forms electronically through www.Grants.gov

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below. The criteria listed are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of an application.

Organizational capacity and record on previous grants: The organization has expertise in its stated field and PDS is confident of its ability to undertake the program. This includes a financial management system and a bank account.

Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea – The program idea is well developed, with detail about how program activities will be carried out. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline.

Goals and objectives: Goals and objectives are clearly stated and program approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results.

Embassy priorities: Applicant has clearly described how stated goals are related to and support U.S. Embassy Sofia's priority areas or target audiences.

Budget: The budget justification is detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities.

Monitoring and evaluation plan: Applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provide milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes output and outcome indicators, and shows how and when those will be measured.

Sustainability: Program activities will continue to have positive impact after the end of the program.

2. Review and Selection Process

A Grants Review Committee will evaluate all eligible applications.

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

For any Federal award under a notice of funding opportunity, if the Federal awarding agency anticipates that the total Federal share will be greater than the simplified acquisition threshold over the period of performance (see §200.01 Simplified Acquisition Threshold), this section must also inform applicants that:

- i. 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);
- ii. An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM that a Federal awarding agency previously entered;
- iii. 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 §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

4. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

Applications received prior to the program end date will be periodically reviewed approximately every two months (in December, February, April, June, and August) and applicants will be notified of review committee decisions after the panel following their grant submission.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Payment Method: Payments will be made in at least two installments, as needed to carry out the program activities.

Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified via email.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Terms and Conditions: 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. These include: 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 600, Certifications and Assurances, and the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, all of which are available at: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>. Note the U.S Flag branding and marking requirements in the Standard Terms and Conditions.

3. Reporting

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit program and financial reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact PDS at: SofiaGrants@state.gov.

Note: We do not provide any pre-consultation for application related questions that are addressed in the NOFO. Once an application has been submitted, State Department officials and staff — both in the Department and at embassies overseas — may not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process is completed.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Personnel: Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the program, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the program.

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program. If the program involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

Equipment: Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property that is required for the program, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least \$5,000 per unit.

Supplies: List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the program. If an item costs more than \$5,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

Contractual: Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also describe any sub-awards to non-profit partners that may help carry out the program activities.

Other Direct Costs: Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All “Other” or “Miscellaneous” expenses must be itemized and explained.

Indirect Costs: These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of 10% of the **modified total direct costs** as defined in [2 CFR 200.68](#).

“Cost Sharing” refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers’ time and donated venues.

Alcoholic Beverages: Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.

The Department of State may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements detailed in Section D3 (Required Registrations). The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin registration early in the process.