

# FAQs

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## Eligibility and Requirements

1. **Page 3, Program Summary indicates “Grants may not be used for the purpose of student scholarships.” This is repeated on page 4 under Purpose and again on page 5 under Eligibility. Please clarify: does this mean that grant funding may not be used to subsidize total program cost and travel expenses for participating students. Or does it mean that funding may not be directly awarded to students.**
  - Funding may not be directed toward students nor to subsidize total program costs and travel expenses.
2. **Page 4, Section 2, Funding Goal states, “...competition that ensures outreach to a diverse array of accredited U.S. HEIs, especially institutions in the beginning stages of their study abroad programming.” Does this mean that institutions with established study abroad programming are ineligible or at a disadvantage?**
  - No, institutions with established programs are eligible; however they must demonstrate how the establishment of a new program is enabling them to diversify participation in study abroad by their own measures.
3. **Are programs intended to expand capacity in Cuba eligible?**
  - The overall goal of the grant is not intended to solely expand capacity in Cuba; however, Cuba is eligible as a location.
4. **For the purpose of this proposal, is study abroad defined as both short-term and long-term study in another country? Community college students have difficulty traveling abroad for full semesters because of jobs, families, and other responsibilities. Will it be acceptable to write to build capacity for short-term (2-4 week) study abroad? Thank you.**
  - Yes, study abroad is defined by both short-term and long-term in another country. This may be a 1-week trip with a cohort as part of a semester course.
5. **Does our organization have to be vetted through the .gov grant process as a nonprofit?**
  - No.
6. **Under 3. Responsibilities, the second bullet that reads "Providing recent audits and signing a contract outlining the regulations and constraints of the grant"--I'm confused about the "recent audits:" does this refer to the audits listed elsewhere in the RFP or reports regarding current study abroad numbers? Also, would it be appropriate for the proposal to include basic start-up issues related to additional study-abroad programs? For example, faculty from here going to a partner institution in Africa and working with staff there to create a program for underrepresented students/disciplines here?**
  - Should your application be recommended for funding, your institution must demonstrate that it qualifies as a nonprofit higher educational institution per the terms outlined in the RFP. Activities related to capacity building to increase outbound study abroad programs under the terms outlined in the RFP may include preparatory travel by faculty/staff if justified under the proposed program.
7. **What types of contributions are expected from participating institutions? Can they be completely in-kind and an enhancement of pre-existing support, e.g., staff support, scholarships, international and domestic partner continued collaboration, etc.?**

- Contributions from participating organizations may include a variety of types of cash or in-kind support. All proposed cost share must be clearly explained in the budget and budget narrative and, should the applicant receive grant funds, it must be accounted for as part of financial reports as outlined in the RFP.
- 8. We are a public/state controlled institution of higher education but not a 501(c)3. Will we still be eligible to apply for this grant? If not, may we apply through a fiscal agent such as a university foundation?**
- The details of this question are not clear for us to answer. Please contact the Program Officer at [studyaborad@partners.net](mailto:studyaborad@partners.net) to clarify this question. [Defer to ECA.]
- 9. If primary organization is Higher Education Institution, is a partner organization required? Can you define what the partner organization should be?**
- A partner organization is not required. A partner organization may be another U.S. Higher Education Institution, overseas institution, or another organization or entity that is essential to the implementation of the proposed capacity building activities.
- 10. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit study abroad awareness-raising and scholarship-granting organization, specifically supporting U.S. underrepresented undergraduate students (75% first-generation; 73% minority background; 83% community-college) studying in non-traditional countries. We have spoken to ECA about this Capacity Building Grant, however Section III, #1 indicates that applications must originate from an "accredited U.S. public or private non-profit HEI." Are we eligible to apply to create new programming (non-scholarship) given that we are not an HEI, but are dedicated to supporting HEI students?**
- You are not eligible to be the prime applicant in this competition. However, you may partner with an eligible HEI and they would need to submit the application on behalf of your partnership.
- 11. We are an HEI that has an established study abroad program through which we award academic credit. To be eligible for this grant, does an international HEI have to award the academic credits?**
- No.
- 12. Questions regarding full-time director**
- a) The RFP states that a "full-time director is required." Does this mean there must be a director working on the project full-time or that there must be at least one full-time director level staff member working on the project for a percentage of their time?
  - b) In the Budget Narrative section under #3 (Administrative Costs) the last sentence of the first bullet notes, "A full-time director is required." Does this mean that the project and staff proposed in this grant must report to an already existing Director-level position within the institution, or that there must be a full-time Director position created/dedicated only to this project/proposal?
  - c) In the administrative costs section I noted a full time director is required. Does that mean the institution that is applying has to have a full time director of study abroad? Or would an international education director suffice.

- The proposed program must have a designated staff member who will be available to manage the study abroad program and respond to inquiries from Partners and ECA. This staff member does not necessarily need to spend 100% of his/her time on this program.

**13. I would like to know if a Consortium would be eligible to submit a proposal for this grant on behalf of our six member schools?**

- The applicant must be from a higher education institution. If awarded a grant, the funds will be dispersed to a single higher education institution; however funds could be used to support programming of a consortia and thus helping build capacity to other member institutions.

**14. Is Ecuador an eligible country for study abroad under this call for proposals?**

- Yes

**15. Where the RFP refers to the "diversity of student participation in study abroad," does this refer to underrepresented populations in study abroad, on the home campus, or both? For instance, male students are not underrepresented in our university's student body, but they are underrepresented in university's study abroad student population. Would a proposed program aiming to increase the number of male students studying abroad be considered as increasing the diversity of student participation in study abroad?**

- Diversity will look differently for each institution. It is the applicant's responsibility to explain how/why the proposed program is meeting their diversity goals. In this case, the lack of male students in the study abroad student population could be classified as underrepresented. You can refer back to "Diversity Guidelines" on page 14 of the Request for Proposal to see what constitutes diversity.

**16. Questions regarding multiple applications per institution**

**a) Can multiple departments within the same institution apply?**

**b) Will you receive more than one grant application per institution? At our university we have several study abroad offices.**

- Yes, but only one application per institution may be awarded.

**17. Diversity/Diversification goals: Can we focus on one degree program? Can we focus on one ethnic or gender group across two degree programs?**

- Yes, single or multiple degree programs are eligible to meet the diversification goal as long as the applicant is able to explain how/why it meets the goal (by answering how is it underrepresented). The same applies for the ethnic or gender group. Applicants must give background on study abroad participation at their institution in order to demonstrate how these groups or programs meet the diversity goals

## The Capacity Building Grants for U.S. Undergraduate Study Abroad

- 18. I cannot seem to get on a site that has the electronic application form. When I use the website provided in the call for proposals I get to a page that says the page is no longer functional. What can I do about this in order to fill out the application?**
- You can access the online application by clicking this link:  
[http://partnersoftheamericas.formstack.com/forms/us\\_studyabroad\\_application](http://partnersoftheamericas.formstack.com/forms/us_studyabroad_application)
- 19. Questions regarding geographic limitations & restrictions**
- a) As a former POA volunteer, I am aware of your organization’s geographic focus in the Western Hemisphere. I was therefore a little surprised that there was no geographic limitation mentioned in the Request for Proposals. Could you please confirm or correct my interpretation that POA will consider proposed study abroad programs without any geographic limitations or restrictions?**
  - b) If the Capacity Building Grants are limited to the Americas, is an HEI limited to Study Abroad Programs that correspond to the North/South Partnership in that HEI’s home state? For example, would any Study Abroad Program proposed by a unit of LSU have to correspond to the Louisiana-El Salvador Partnership?**
  - c) May these grants be utilized to create study abroad partnerships with HEI's in any country? Are US colleges required to partner with HEI’s in Central and South America for the purpose of this grant? Does it have to be only with Latin American countries? We would like to connect with European universities**
  - d) Is this grant for study program partner building across the world, or primarily for partners in Americas (e.g., Latin America)? Will East Asia study abroad capacity building proposals be eligible for consideration?**
  - e) Could you please confirm or correct my interpretation that Partners of the Americas will consider proposed study abroad programs without any geographic limitations or restrictions?**
  - f) Are grants limited to projects focused on study abroad in the Americas?**
  - g) Are these grants specifically designed for increasing capacity in any particular location, i.e. Latin America and the Caribbean?**
- Partners of the Americas is implementing this global program on behalf of the U.S. Department of State. This Capacity Building Program has no regional focus and neither Partners of the Americas nor the review panel, in which Partners of the Americas is not a voting member, provides any preference for geographic regions of the world, aside from the described diversity goals in the terms of the RFP. Please note funds cannot be used to support programs in locations where there is a U.S. Department of State travel warning
- 20. How is “sustainability” defined for this grant?**
- Sustainability is defined through a demonstration that this program, once established, will have the institutional support to continue and/or create a multiplier effect on campus and contribute to study abroad growth and institutional capacity building.
- 21. We understand that Partners of the Americas is a non-profit entity and that the ECA/Dept. of State (Federal source) is directing the program. Should the funding be considered as originating from a non-profit or from a federal source? In determining the correct indirect cost rate to use, should we apply the non-profit or federal rate to direct costs?**

- Applicants are encouraged but not required to waive some or all of their administrative or indirect rates. For a relatively small (\$50,000) grant, we do not think it is a good use of grant resources for a high indirect rate to be applied to much of the grant.
- 22. Is this a new grant, or has it been previously awarded? If previously awarded, may we know about previous awardees?**
- Capacity building grants have been issued by the U.S. Department of State in the past under a different funding source. In mid-February you can find information about past recipients at: <https://studyabroad.state.gov/node/2352>. In the meantime, to see what constitutes a successful application, you can refer back to the RFP pages 12-13 where it lists what the applicant will be evaluated on – a well thought out program description & program idea, sustainability plan, institutional capacity & management approach, monitoring & evaluation plan, and cost proposal.
- 23. Would a targeted marketing campaign be an acceptable objective for the use of this funding?**
- Yes, if the campaign builds institutional study abroad capacity. You would have to demonstrate a link between the campaign and actual performance outcomes.
- 24. Will the grant support Community Service projects as part of the study abroad program for minority engineering undergraduate students?**
- Yes, if the proposed program justifies how this project meets the capacity building activities proposed under the terms of the RFP.
- 25. Will projects for minority engineering students including language study and a community service component be eligible under this program? Thank you.**
- Yes, if the proposed program justifies how this project meets the capacity building activities proposed under the terms of the RFP.
- 26. Will this grant opportunity be offered in subsequent years?**
- The availability of future grants is contingent upon additional funding from the U.S. Department of State.
- 27. Does the HEI need to have an MOU with a partner organization?**
- No, but the execution of an MOU is one measure for demonstrating institutional commitment to the program of study.
- 28. Are there any preferred criteria beyond the general: increase diversification of students or diversification of locations?**
- There is also the diversification of the field of studies. You can refer back to “Diversity Guidelines” on page 14 of the Request for Proposal to see what constitutes as diversity.

## Timeline

### **29. Questions regarding the duration of the grant.**

- a) **How long does the grant last for? Does the money have to be spent within the year?**
  - b) **If an institution is awarded a grant, is there a certain time frame by which the award amount needs to be used? Would it need to be used within a year? Three years?**
  - c) **Is there a timeline / deadline for when Grant money needs to be used?**
  - d) **For the 2016-2017 competition, could award funding be applied toward a program in summer 2017 that runs until mid-September? Or would this be ineligible because it is outside the performance dates? (Our university supports a short-term faculty-led program model in August and September before the start of the fall quarter in late September.)**
- The project period is June 1, 2016 - August 31, 2017. This is how long the institution will have to use the awarded grant.

### **30. Can we run our program(s) every other year?**

- The project period is June 1, 2016 - August 31, 2017. This is how long the institution will have to use the awarded grant. Applicants must describe how their proposed program will be implemented and continue after the grant period has expired. Sustainability is defined through a demonstration that this program, once established, will have the institutional support to continue and/or create a multiplier effect on campus and contribute to study abroad growth and institutional capacity building. Therefore, it is up to the institution to decide how often to run the program after the grant period.

## Budget

### **31. Questions regarding travel and student scholarships**

- a) **I understand that grant funds cannot be used for student scholarships. Is this limited to tuition scholarships? Can the grant funds be used for student travel stipends?**
  - b) **I was curious if travel funds could be used for students (rather than faculty/staff) with a strong, relevant justification?**
  - c) **Am I correct in understanding that none of these funds can be used to actually help support the students who travel?**
  - d) **The RFP states that this grant cannot support student scholarships. Can it support stipends for travel?**
  - e) **What are some examples of the kinds of costs that can be covered by the grant? For example, could the university pay for accommodations for students abroad, thus reducing the out-of-pocket cost of a program for students, or would that be considered a type of "scholarship"?**
  - f) **I understand that the grant may not be used for student scholarships. Can a portion of the funds be used to help off-set the cost of an international experience, such as travel grants, subsidized housing in the overseas location, or meal reimbursements (for students)?**
- Funding may not be directed toward students nor to subsidize total program costs and travel expenses. The only travel that may be supported by this grant is for faculty or staff. The applicant must give a well-justified reason as to why/how faculty or staff travel will support the goals of the capacity building activities outlined in the proposal. You can refer back to the RFP page 10-11 for examples of allowable costs.

### **32. Questions regarding cost share & indirect costs**

- a) **The RFP clearly states that cost-sharing is strongly encouraged and administrative and indirect costs should be kept as low as possible. Page 13 states that indirect cost rates should be "reasonable." Is there a maximum percentage or range that indirect cost rates, if included, should be kept under in the cost proposal?**
- b) **What is the allowable institutional overhead charge? Our partner university -- UCLA -- charges up to 56% of any grant. But they sometimes allow no overhead if the granting agency insist on that. So wanted to know what your guidelines are.**
- c) **What is the desired institutional in-kind or institutional match?**
- d) **Should institutions use their federally negotiated indirect cost rate? Or is there another specific indirect cost rate that is required?**
- e) **The RFP suggests "Applicants are strongly encouraged although not required to provide maximum levels of cost sharing through institutional direct, indirect, or in-kind funding contributions." Is there a dollar amount that is suggested? I wondered if there could be more detail or examples provided of what models of cost-sharing would be reasonable.**
- f) **The maximum grant award is \$50,000. Can you explain what the granting agency considers a "high level of commitment to increasing study abroad from their U.S. institution to other countries through in-kind contributions or institutional cost-sharing"?**
- There is no maximum percentage or range for indirect cost; however applicants are encouraged to keep these costs low. Different institutions and their partners may be capable of committing different levels of cost share. One option to consider is to cost share the overhead charges to reduce the overall charge to the grant.

**33. Can IDC (indirect costs) be included as part of the requested funds?**

- Yes, all direct and indirect costs should be included in the budget and stated which is covered by cost share, if applicable, and which will be covered by the grant.

**34. The RFP says "grants may not be used for the purpose of student scholarships," but can project staff include student employees paid from the award, e.g. for project coordination? (That is - is it all student stipends/payments that are disallowed, or only funds to support a student's study abroad experience?)**

- Funds to support a student worker who will work on the development or coordination of the program are allowable through this grant. However funds cannot be used to support a student's participation on the study abroad program.

**35. On page 10, under "allowable costs", international airfare is included. 2. Page 4, Funding Goal states "It is expected that the grants will also expand capacity to destination countries not already accessible to the student body at the home institution." Please clarify: Does this mean that funding from this grant may not be used to support a new program in a destination country where other student programs already exist?**

- If the creation of a new program in a destination country where another program exists and creates opportunities for diversification of student participants by discipline or other factors, it is eligible.

**36. If the organization has a federally negotiated indirect cost rate, must the full rate be used?**

- No.

**37. When the RFP says that "infrastructure development activities" are not eligible, what are examples of these activities? I feel that some items outside of scholarships could be**

**considered infrastructure development activities even if they aren't meant to be purposefully ineligible.**

- Infrastructure Development Activities not covered in this grant is referring to “bricks and mortar support” – physical infrastructure such as construction, reconstruction materials, and maintenance of facilities such as tools and furniture

**38. I'm wondering if you can share a specific example of what this grant may be used for. Because it does not allow to fund/partially fund students' participation in the form of a scholarship, and it does not support the physical creation of a study abroad site (bricks & mortar), I'm really lacking on understanding what this amount of money could actually be used for.**

- This grant is aimed to support the planning, set-up, and implementation of a study abroad program and/or building institutional capacity. For examples of past recipients of ECA capacity building grants refer to <https://studyabroad.state.gov/node/2352> in mid-February.

**39. Are there any additional budget restrictions beyond the following: - Requests for infrastructure development activities are not eligible - Grants cannot be used to send U.S. citizens to conferences/conference-type seminars (limited funding may be available if the opportunity provides study abroad capacity building) - Grants cannot be used for student scholarships**

- Faculty travel is covered only when giving a well-justified reason as to why/how it will go towards the goal of the capacity building activities outlined in the proposal.

**40. Is the budget to be aimed primarily at administrative support for the program?**

- This grant is aimed to support the planning, set-up, and implementation of a study abroad program and/or building institutional capacity.

**41. Per 2CFR200, cost sharing is not allowed unless it is mandatory. Reading between the lines, it seems that cost share is indeed mandatory. Is this the case?**

- Please note that 2CFR200 refers to funds given directly from the federal government. Since funds are given to Partners of the Americas and issued to the HEIs, this code does not apply to HEIs for this competition.

**42. Can we build in the Program development director's salary into this grant?**

- The grant may cover the salary of staff directly working to plan and implement the study abroad program, such as program directors, coordinators, officers, and professors. The salary of staff working to raise money to go toward cost share, such as Program Development directors, will not be covered by this grant.

**43. Can we partner with third party providers for matching funds?**

- Yes, this would fall under “cost share” on page 6 of the RFP

**44. What costs are not covered through this grant?**

- For costs covered through this grant, refer to the Request for Proposal page 6 under “Other Eligibility Requirements”

## Required Supporting Documents

### **45. What kind of previous records will be required of the participating institutions?**

- The Applicant must include a brief description of their institutional experience with study abroad programs. Applicants should also provide letter(s) of support from relevant department/school/college/university administrative staff.

## Application Review & Selection Process

### **46. On p. 7 of the RFP, the list of items to be submitted includes "1. A program proposal of no more than 10 pages, which includes sub-sections A-H as outline in Section V: Application Review; 2. Calendar of activities/timeline." Yet subsection H of section V is the calendar of activities/timeline. Is the calendar/timeline included in the 10 page maximum (as implied in item 1) or is it a separate section in addition to the 10 page proposal (as implied by item 2)?**

- The Calendar/Activities Timeline (sub-section H) will be a general timeline of program activities. Item 2 under the Technical Application Format will be considered a part of the appendices should you wish to give detailed descriptions of the activities mentioned in the timeline, including monitoring and evaluation.

## Other

### **47. What if there is a travel restriction warning by the State Department on the country your institution wishes to do study abroad?**

- Funds cannot be used to support programs in locations where there is a U.S. Department of State travel warning.

### **48. Questions regarding past programs awarded**

**a) As I read the guidelines carefully, I was wondering if there are successful applications under this funding authority that are available for review?**

**b) Have these awards ever been made in the past, or is this a new program? We are wondering what a successful application and budget looks like.**

- Capacity building grants have been issued by the U.S. Department of State in the past under a different funding source. In mid-February you can find information about past recipients at: <https://studyabroad.state.gov/node/2352>. In the meantime, to see what constitutes a successful application, you can refer back to the RFP pages 12-13 where it lists what the applicant will be evaluated on – a well thought out program description & program idea, sustainability plan, institutional capacity & management approach, monitoring & evaluation plan, and cost proposal.

### **49. It is my understanding that the funding is federal in nature. Could you provide the associated CFDA number (catalog of federal domestic assistance)?**

- Since funds are given directly to Partners of the Americas to administer the capacity building competition and awards issued to HEIs, the CFDA number is not applicable for this competition.

### **50. Can we run our programs in multiple locations?**

- Yes.