

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. Embassy Belgrade
Public Diplomacy Section (PDS)
Notice of Funding Opportunity

Funding Opportunity Title: *University Partnership Program (FY2023)*

Funding Opportunity Number: *SRB10023FO-03*

Deadline for Applications: *April 19, 2023*

Assistance Listing Number: *19.900*

Total Amount Available: *\$450,000*

Please note that this notice is subject to availability of funding.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) of the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade announces an open competition for organizations to submit applications for the **University Partnership Program**. Please follow all instructions below.

Please check for information on other PDS funding opportunities on the U.S. Embassy website at: <https://rs.usembassy.gov/grants-programs/>.

Priority Region: Serbia

Program Objectives:

The U.S. Embassy works to assist the Serbian people to strengthen democracy, rule of law, and the protection of human rights; help fight brain drain and advance the country's economic development; promote regional stability and cooperation; cooperate with international partners to combat crime, terrorism, human trafficking, and other global challenges; and make further progress towards Serbia's accession into the European Union. We also strive to explain U.S. policies, culture, society, and values to Serbian audiences and deepen ties between our two countries.

University partnership proposals should support these goals while facilitating lasting connections between Serbian and American institutions of higher education.

Proposals can involve in-person and/or virtual exchanges for students, faculty, and/or administrators as well as any of the following activities: curriculum development; needs assessments; joint online courses; joint research projects; development of a joint degree program; development of a study abroad program; sharing of best teaching practices and instructional methods; support for participation in academic conferences or student competitions (e.g., moot court, Model U.S. Congress, Model United Nations); establishing an American Studies course or academic program; setting up a center focused on American Studies; and/or establishing or strengthening a career development center or a research and development center.

We welcome proposals which provide Serbian students and professors:

- o American academic perspectives on shared areas of interest and lessons learned from the American experience in the focus subject(s);
- o Insights into current research and academic debates in the U.S. on the focus subject(s);
- o The chance to engage in discussions and debate with their American counterparts; and/or
- o The opportunity to experience and assess teaching methodologies used in American university classrooms.

Partnership program proposals should be two-way exchanges that also give American participants the opportunity to broaden their perspectives, provide them with new insights, and allow them to learn firsthand from Serbian academics about their research projects. We welcome proposals that utilize video conferencing, distance learning tools, etc., to enhance and extend the two-way exchange beyond in-person opportunities.

University partnership proposals should be crafted with a S.M.A.R.T. logic model. The objective of your activity should be: Specific, Measurable, realistically Achievable within the period of the grant, Relevant to an actual problem or challenge, and Time-based, meaning that you will be able to finish the project and measure the impact by a set date.

In accordance with the [Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Underserved Communities](#), proposals should demonstrate how the program advances equity with respect to race, ethnicity, religion, income, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability. The proposal should also demonstrate how the program will further engagement in underserved communities and with individuals from underserved communities. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing racial equity and underserved communities will enhance the program's goals and objectives, as well as the experience of participants.

Grantees are expected to: publicize your activities, including through social media and/or traditional press outlets; and highlight U.S. Embassy support, with our logo included on project-related materials.

Program Themes: The Embassy is seeking applications that focus on any of the following academic fields:

- ***Social Sciences:***
 - o *International Affairs*
 - o *Security Studies*
 - o *Mediation, Peace, and Conflict Resolution Studies*
 - o *Regional or Area Studies: European Studies, Eurasian or Russia Area Studies, Asian Studies, Western Balkan Studies*
 - o *American Studies / American Minority Studies / American Gender Studies*
 - o *U.S. History*
 - o *U.S. Government and Politics*
 - o *Law and Human Rights*
 - o *Holocaust Studies*
- ***Journalism***

- **Education:**
 - *Civics Education / Teaching of Social Studies*
 - *Holocaust and Tolerance Education*
 - *Special Education (for students with physical and/or learning disabilities)*
 - *Educational Technology (incl. distance learning)*

- **Economics / Business / Management / Economic Development / Entrepreneurship, specifically:**
 - *Agro-business and Agricultural Development*
 - *e-Commerce, e-Business*
 - *Renewable & Sustainable Energy Studies*
 - *Tourism Management / Cultural Preservation / Museum Management*
 - *Local Economic Development*

Note: If your institution is interested in developing a partnership focused on other academic fields besides the ones listed above, please contact PDS early in the application process to see if that field would be acceptable within the above framework.

All proposals should seek to strengthen Serbian academic institutions and innovative methods of instruction.

Participants and Audiences:

Participants or primary audiences for university partnership proposals should be Serbian and American students, professors/academics, and/or administrators.

Depending on focus, projects may have secondary audiences or beneficiaries including media, civil society organizations or wider professional audiences, which you may note in the proposal.

If your project idea might involve citizens of any other countries, check C.4. below to understand restrictions on funding.

Information Session. PDS will hold a virtual information session on February 7, 2023, at 16:00 (4 pm) Central European time to discuss this funding opportunity and to answer questions from potential applicants. Please contact PDS at BelgradeUniP@state.gov for details.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: 6 to 30 months (including the evaluation)
 Number of awards anticipated: 1-5 awards (dependent on dollar amounts of the grants)
 Award amounts: awards may range from a minimum of \$60,000 to a maximum of \$450,000
 Total available funding: \$450,000
 Type of Funding: FY22/23 Economic Support Funds under the Foreign Assistance Act.
 Anticipated program start date: Flexible, but no earlier than September 1, 2023.

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant.

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed in 30 months or less. (This includes the time for assessment and evaluation, as well as the drafting of the final report.)

The Department of State may 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 following entities, from Serbia or from the United States, are eligible to apply:
 - a. public universities in the Republic of Serbia;
 - b. accredited U.S. universities (public or private);
 - c. non-profit educational foundations legally registered in the United States with the demonstrated capacity to fulfill the objectives outlined in this NOFO, i.e., to set up one or more university partnership programs.

To be eligible for consideration, every Serbia-based applicant organization must be registered in the territory of the Republic of Serbia with the Agencija za privredne registre (APR), or a relevant court.

- 2. Cost Sharing or Matching.** Cost sharing is allowed but not required and will not impact funding decisions.

While filling out the application, you will be required to tell us whether you are also receiving funding from other donors for your project. Please be aware, however, that you must be able to carry out all the activities described in your application with the funding you receive, even if the contributions from other donors or other funding sources fail to materialize.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements.

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.

If an applicant (either individual or organization) has already received a grant from the U.S. Embassy the grant period for the new project will overlap with the existing one, or if an organization has submitted more than one project proposal, please use section “y” in the

application form to explain how you will manage more than one project and describe your capacity to do so.

4. Funding Restrictions.

You may NOT apply for a grant from PDS if your project:

- involves partisan political activity;
- involves charitable activities and/or the distribution of humanitarian aid;
- is a fundraising campaign;
- is commercial in nature, i.e., you or a project partner are making money from this project, or the activity supports a current or future business or entrepreneurial venture.
- involves the provision of health care or services, childcare, food subsidies, or other social services to populations.

This funding opportunity aims to support specific projects with objectives which can be achieved within a set timeframe. We will not accept applications which are aimed more broadly at supporting your organization's usual or typical daily activities and operations. Those will be deemed technically ineligible and will not be considered for funding by the review committee.

As a general rule, participants or audiences should not be charged for taking part in any PDS-funded activity. If you envisage that your project activity will not be free for some reason, please contact PDS while you are in the process of completing the application to see whether that could be allowed. Depending on the funding source, PDS might be able to support your project, but only if you can demonstrate how the revenue generated will be used to support the larger objectives and explain that your organization will profit from the modest entrance fee.

See also "Guidelines for Budget Justification" under Section H below for more information on budget items.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Requesting the Application Package

Application forms required below are available at <https://rs.usembassy.gov/grants-programs/>.

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.

Please ensure that:

- 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 documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper, and
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

The following documents are **required**:

- a. One of the following two forms:
 - **SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance – organizations)** if the applicant is an organization; or
 - **SF-424-I (Application for Federal Assistance --individuals)** if the applicant is an individual person;
- b. **SF-424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)**
- c. **SF-424B (Assurances for Non-Construction programs)** if the applicant is:
 - an individual;
 - an organization whose registration in SAM.gov is still pending.
- d. **Grant Application Form for FY2023 (Fiscal Year 2023)**. Note: Detailed directions for filling out the grant application are included with the form.
- e. **Budget Justification Narrative (Excel Spreadsheet)**: After filling out the SF-424A Budget (above), use the Excel spreadsheet template to describe and explain each of the budget expenses in detail. See *section H. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions* below for further information.
- f. **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, if applicable.
 - If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA should be included as a PDF file.
 - Official permission letters, if required for program activities.
 - If you still have not completed SAM.gov registration, a screenshot from SAM.gov reflecting that you have started the process.

Please follow all the instructions when filling out the Application Form.

3. Required Registrations:

All organizations applying for grants must register in the System for Award Management (SAM) at www.SAM.gov. Once you start the registration the system will generate a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). The registration is free of charge.

Any applicant with an exclusion in the System for Award Management (SAM) is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), “Debarment and Suspension.”

The Unique Entity Identifier (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. SAM.gov is the Federal government's primary database for complying with FFATA reporting requirements. OMB designated SAM.gov as the central repository to facilitate applicant and recipient use of a single public website that consolidates data on all federal financial assistance. Under the law, it is mandatory to register in SAM.gov.

To access SAM.gov an organization is required to have a Login.gov account. Organization can create an account at <https://login.gov/>. As a reminder, organizations need to renew its sam.gov registration annually.

www.sam.gov requires all entities to renew their registration once a year in order to maintain an active registration status in SAM.gov. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure it has an active registration in SAM.gov.

If an organization plans to issue a sub-contract or sub-award, those sub-awardees must also have a unique entity identifier (UEI number). Those entities can register for a UEI only at SAM.gov.

If an organization does not have an active registration in SAM.gov prior to submitting an application, the application will be deemed **ineligible**. All organizations applying for grants must obtain these registrations, the latter are free of charge.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The registration process can take some time and past applicants have, in fact, run into difficulties. Please do not wait until the last minute to start the registration process. If in the end you are unable to complete the SAM registration by the application submission deadline, check the appropriate box in section “h” of the application form after “SAM.gov Registration,” and attach a screenshot from SAM.gov as proof that you have started the registration process. Let us know as soon as you have completed your SAM registration. Until that step is complete, the review panel will not read or consider your application. If you are unable to finish the SAM registration process, we unfortunately will be unable to support your project.

Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than April 19, 2023.

5. Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted by email to BelgradeUniP@state.gov.

If PDS does not receive a complete project proposal at the above address by the deadline, it will be considered technically ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below.

- **Quality of the project proposal.** The proposal is well-developed, clear, and innovative. It offers a creative approach and/or solutions to deal with the stated problem or challenge, focused on specific audiences or participants, with an approach that is likely to achieve results and have an impact. The application includes sufficient details that spell out exactly what the project activities will entail, and how and when elements will be carried out, with a reasonable implementation timeline and clear milestones provided. Appropriate partners, if applicable, have been identified and have agreed to take part in the activity. **(40 points)**
- **Organizational capacity and (if applicable) record on previous grants.** The individual or organization submitting this application has the qualifications, skills, talent, drive, and/or demonstrated ability, perhaps with the assistance of an identified partner organization or contractor, to carry out the grant activities (outputs) with the participants, which will provide a good chance of achieving the goals and objectives laid out in the proposal. Applicant has sufficient internal controls in place to monitor activities, track spending, etc. If the applicant has received a grant (or grants) in the past from PDS or others, those were carried out in line with the project proposal[s], reports were filed in a timely manner, etc. **(20 points)**
- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan.** The project has a clearly identified, S.M.A.R.T. objectives (in addition to outputs), with a good approach to measure the impact of the grant activity on target audiences and/or to bring about some change. (S.M.A.R.T. stands for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.) The proposal outlines in sufficient detail how activities will be monitored or tracked. The applicant also has a plan for how to measure or evaluate impact or results, giving the organization the ability to explain in a report or what has changed as a result of the project, where the project succeeded, where it might have fallen short, and to discuss lessons learned. **(15 points)**
- **Support of Underserved Communities.** The proposal should clearly demonstrate how the program will support and advance equity and engage underserved communities in program administration, design, and implementation. **(5 points)**
- **Budget.** The figures, narrative, and justification are complete and reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget accounts for all necessary expenses and the justification is detailed. Costs are reasonable and realistic in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. **(20 points)**

- **Potential for Multiplier Effect/Longer-term Impact/Sustainability.** The proposal includes a discussion of the follow-on impact of the funded activity even after the end of the program through the multiplier effect or through expected follow-on activities by the applicant and/or partners and/or primary or secondary audiences. **(Up to 10 points extra)**

2. Review and Selection Process

A grants review committee will evaluate all eligible applications. You may be asked to submit additional information and/or a revised budget. Please also be aware that, depending on the availability of funding, PDS might be able to fund only part of the budget you have requested.

3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

PDS anticipates that final funding decisions will be made by May 30, 2023.

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: PDS will discuss payment method and frequency with you before issuance of the award.

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.

These include:

- [2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT](#)
- [2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION](#)
- [2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS](#)
- [2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE \(FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE\)](#)
- [2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY](#)
- [2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS](#)
- [U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#)

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget’s guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following: NOTE:

- [Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#) (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register’s 85 FR 49506 on August 13, 2020, particularly on:
 - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
 - Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. No. 115—232) (2 CFR part 200.216),
 - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
 - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
 - Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

3. Reporting

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.

The final report to PDS must be submitted no later than 120 days after the project end date.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact:

BelgradeUniP@state.gov.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Personnel and Fringe Benefits: 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. Fees should be reasonable, in accordance with expected levels in the locality where the grant activity is taking place.

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program, for program staff, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. Costs for international travel, including within the Balkans, can be included in the budget only if that travel is essential to the implementation of the project. Please make sure the project proposal makes clear why international travel is necessary. If you are proposing a visit to Serbia by a subject matter expert, trainer, instructors, performer, or anyone else from the United States, please contact PDS to check whether that would be an allowable expense.

Honorarium: Honorarium is limited to a maximum of \$250 per day. Compensation for time spent preparing for a presentation, workshop, or other activity, however, can be included in Personnel and Fringe Benefits, including hours spent in preparation based on a realistic hourly rate.

Equipment: The budget cannot include purchase of any equipment, which is defined by the USG as property costing \$5,000 or more with a useful life of one year (or longer than the duration of the grant). Only rental of equipment is allowed. The rental should be listed under “Other Direct Costs.”

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.”

Promotional Material: In the spirit of U.S. higher education traditions, PDS encourages applicants to include promotional materials that symbolize and boost cohesion and enthusiasm for the university partnership. These could include: pens, T-shirts, notepad, flash drives, etc.

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 will 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. If you do this, you are obviously not allowed to include itemized indirect costs in your budget request.

“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.