

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. EMBASSY COTONOU PUBLIC DIPLOMACY SECTION
Annual Program Statement**

Funding Opportunity Title: U.S. Embassy Cotonou PDS Request for Statements of Interest: Annual Program Statement
Funding Opportunity Number: PAS-SGP-FY21-01
Deadline for Applications: Round 1: March 7, 2021 (11:59 p.m.)
Round 2: June 27, 2021 (11:59 p.m.)
CFDA Number: 19.040 – Public Diplomacy Programs
Total Amount Available: Approximately \$128,000 (Subject to Availability of Funds)
Maximum for Each Award: Varies (See Priority Program Objectives)

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Embassy Cotonou Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) of the U.S. Department of State announces a Request for Statements of Interest (RSOI) from organizations interested in applying for funding for program proposals that **strengthen cultural ties between the United States and Benin** through cultural and exchange programming that highlights shared values and promotes bilateral cooperation. PDS invites organizations interested in potential funding to submit SOI applications outlining program concepts that reflect this goal. Please carefully follow all instructions below.

The submission of a SOI is the first step in a two-part process. Applicants must first submit a SOI, which is a concise, *one to two* page concept note designed to clearly communicate a program idea and its objectives before the development of a full proposal application. The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants the opportunity to submit program ideas for PDS to evaluate prior to requiring the development of full proposal applications. Upon review of eligible SOIs, PDS will invite selected applicants to expand their ideas into full proposal applications.

Purpose: PDS Cotonou invites SOIs for programs that **strengthen cultural ties between the United States and Benin** 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-funded programs include, but are not limited to:

- Academic and professional lectures, seminars and speaker programs;
- Artistic and cultural workshops, joint performances and exhibitions;
- Cultural heritage conservation and preservation programs;
- Professional and academic exchanges and programs;
- Experiential learning activities (e.g. Model UN, Model Government).

Priority Program Objectives and Audiences

Project proposals submitted through this APS should address one of the following Priority Program Objectives:

Shared Democratic Values: Activities that promote better understanding of the value and function of democratic tools to improve people's lives, drawing on examples from Benin and the United States, in order to build support for and encourage greater participation in democratic governance. Target audiences include: motivated community leaders who lack formal civics education due to linguistic, literacy, or schooling barriers; primary and secondary school students; religious and community leaders in small towns and rural areas; and/or youth and young adults in northeastern Benin. (Up to three awards anticipated, maximum \$20,000 each).

Investigative Journalism: Activities to strengthen and encourage the use of recognized fact-checking platforms, and/or competitive recognition of journalists producing high-quality reporting on topics of shared U.S.-Beninese interest (e.g. effectiveness of U.S. foreign assistance programs, diversity visa scams, wildlife and human trafficking), in order to strengthen free press and journalism as an institution in Benin. Target audience: journalists. (One to two awards anticipated, maximum \$20,000 each).

U.S.-Benin Partnership: Activities featuring popular American and/or Beninese artists, musicians, cultural figures, and other influencers in order to promote a deeper understanding of the United States' long support for improving health and prosperity in Benin, as well as living habits that lead to healthier and more prosperous lives (e.g. anti-malarial campaigns, COVID-19 prevention, promoting U.S.-Benin trade, etc.). Target audiences include: youth and young adults who use social media or listen to radio as their primary source of information; and/or educated urban adults unaware of U.S. initiatives to support Benin's development. (One to three awards anticipated, maximum \$15,000 each).

Skills for Success: Activities to strengthen Benin's English Club network and promote learning American English, or workshops in French or English to build soft skills (such as resume writing, digital communications, basic financial literacy, public speaking, entrepreneurial skills) using American and Beninese examples, in order to encourage successful participation in the formal economy. Target audiences include: underemployed and unemployed youth who will soon complete or have completed formal education; female microentrepreneurs; and/or educators and community leaders working with at-risk youth populations, especially in northeastern Benin. (One to three awards anticipated, \$15,000 each).

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; or
- Programs that duplicate existing programs.

Authorizing legislation, type and year of funding:

The Statutory Authority for this program is the Smith-Mundt Act. The source of funding is FY2021 Public Diplomacy Funding.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: 6 to 12 months

Number of awards anticipated: varies (dependent on amounts)

Award amounts: awards may range from a minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$20,000

Total available funding: \$128,000 (Anticipated Subject to Availability of Funds)

Type of Funding: Fiscal Year 2021 Public Diplomacy Funding

Anticipated program start date: Varies, April-September 2021

Funding Instrument Type: Grant, Fixed Amount Award, or Cooperative agreement.

This notice is subject to availability of funds.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

The Public Diplomacy Section encourages applications from U.S. and Beninese:

- 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. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

Applicants are only allowed to submit one proposal per organization, per round. If more than one proposal is submitted from an organization, all proposals from that institution will be considered ineligible for funding.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

The U.S. Embassy Cotonou Public Diplomacy Section will accept proposals throughout fiscal year 2021. A grants committee including U.S. Embassy employees will review eligible applications *quarterly*. The review and selection process may take up to three months from *submission* of the proposal. All application materials must be submitted by email to CotonouPASGrants@state.gov.

All Statements of Interest SOI applications should ensure that the following requirements are met:

Please follow all instructions below carefully. SOIs 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 SOI 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 document is **required**:

1. **Program Statement** (not to exceed 2 pages in Microsoft Word) that includes:

- A table listing:
 - Name of the organization;
 - The target country/countries;
 - The total amount of funding requested from PD Cotonou, total amount of cost-share (if any), and total program amount (PD funds + cost-share); and,
 - Program length;
- A synopsis of the program, including a brief statement on how the program will have a demonstrated impact and engage relevant stakeholders;
- A concise breakdown explicitly identifying the program's objectives and the activities and expected results that contribute to each objective; and,
- A brief description of the applicant(s) that demonstrates the applicant(s) expertise and capacity to implement the program and manage a U.S. government award.

There will be **two deadlines** for submission of SOIs – *March 7 and June 27*. Additional rounds may be announced if funding remains available. An organization may submit **no more than one SOIs per round**. Organizations that submit a SOI application for the first round may submit additional applications for each subsequent round, regardless of the outcome of their previous application(s).

E. APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA

1. **Quality of Program Idea:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact. The SOI should explain why the proposed program is needed.
2. **Program Planning:** A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the objectives. A proposed timeline for the program activities should include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
3. **Ability to Achieve Objectives/Institutional Capacity:** A demonstration of the organization's or individual's expertise and previous experience in administering programs.

A Grants Review Committee will evaluate all eligible applications. SOI applicants will be notified of the decision to present a full submission within 30 days of each submission deadline. Instructions on the requirements of a full application submission will be provided at that time.