



PROPOSAL AND BUDGET GUIDANCE FOR EXCHANGE ALUMNI

AEIF 2020 - INTRODUCTION

Please note, the submission process for AEIF 2020 differs from previous AEIF competitions. We encourage you to read this guidance closely and contact the Public Affairs section at the U.S. embassy or consulate in your country before developing your proposal.

The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) is pleased to announce the 2020 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF). AEIF 2020 supports teams of alumni of U.S. government-sponsored international exchange programs with funding from US \$5,000 up to US \$25,000 to support public service projects.

AEIF projects promote shared values and innovative solutions to global challenges. Since its inception in 2011, AEIF has funded nearly 500 alumni-led projects around the world through a competitive global competition. Last year, out of more than 1,400 project submissions, 64 alumni teams representing 52 countries were selected for AEIF funding.

Exchange alumni interested in participating in AEIF should contact the Public Affairs Section at the appropriate U.S. embassy or consulate to determine if there will be an AEIF 2020 competition in your country (<https://www.usembassy.gov/>). Participating Public Affairs Sections will choose and submit the top proposals from their countries to the global AEIF 2020 competition.

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PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The United States is dedicated to working with our partners around the world to advance the essential role of women. AEIF 2020 is designed to catalyze action among alumni to reinforce women's empowerment worldwide and advance the participation of women in peace, security, and governance.

AEIF 2020 will accept public service projects proposed and managed by teams of at least two (2) alumni that women, peace, and security, such as:

- Strengthen the role of women in peace, security, and governance;
- Engage women as partners in preventing terrorism and countering radicalization and recruitment;
- Promote protection of women and girls from violence, abuse, and exploitation; or
- Support women's political, economic*, and civic participation.

**Projects with a correlation to the Academy of Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) and Dreambuilder are not eligible for funding through AEIF and should be submitted to the Public Affairs Section for consideration under the AWE initiative.*

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants must be alumni of [U.S. government-funded or sponsored exchange programs](#), and form teams of at least two (2) alumni.
- Alumni who are U.S. citizens may not submit proposals, but U.S. citizen alumni may participate as team members in a project.
- Alumni teams may be comprised of alumni from different exchange programs and different countries. For example, a team can be comprised of Fulbright alumni from South Korea and Serbia, or can be a team of an IVLP alumnus from Argentina and a Study of the U.S. Institutes alumna from Egypt.
- Proposals must address women in peace, security, and governance. Proposals that do not address the theme as outlined in the program objectives will be deemed ineligible.
- All project activities must take place outside of the United States and its territories.

HOW TO APPLY: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Applicants must contact the Public Affairs Section at the appropriate [U.S. embassy or consulate](#) for country-specific competition guidelines, application forms, and deadlines. All applications must be submitted directly to the Public Affairs Section by their designated deadline. U.S. embassies and consulates will review all submissions and will only submit the top-ranked

proposals from their countries that successfully fulfill the criteria for further consideration in the global AEIF 2020 competition. Check with the embassy or consulate for local deadlines.

ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES AND COSTS

All project activities and initiatives must take place outside of the United States. AEIF 2020 can support the following costs and activities:

- Intra-regional or in-country transportation
- Rental of venues for project activities
- Trainer or speaker expenses
- Reasonable equipment and materials
- Meals or refreshments integral to the project goals (i.e. working lunch during a meeting)
- Communications and publicity materials, such as manuals or project advertisements

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS

AEIF 2020 does not support the following activities or costs, and the selection committee will deem applications involving any of these activities or costs ineligible:

- Airfare to or from the United States and its territories
- Activities that take place in the United States and its territories
- Sustained staff salaries, office space, and overhead/operational expenses
- Large items of durable equipment or construction programs
- Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments, or entertainment
- Academic or scientific research
- Charitable or development activities or the provision of direct social services to a population
- Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation or programs
- Programs that support specific religious activities
- Fund-raising campaigns
- Programs intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the organization
- Venture capital, for-profit endeavors, or charging a fee for participation in the project
- Individual scholarships
- Personal development
- Social travel/visits
- Gifts or prizes
- Programs that duplicate existing programs

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Public Affairs Sections at the U.S. embassy or consulate will use the following criteria to evaluation all applications. After this initial review, the Public Affairs Section will submit the top proposals from their country to the global AEIF 2020 competition. The proposals will be reviewed by a Selection Committee made up of regional and exchange program experts located at the Department of State in Washington, DC. Panelists will use the criteria below to review and evaluate applications. The strongest proposals will be recommended for funding.

Criteria	Maximum points
Purpose and Summary, Description, and Implementation Plan	20 points
Relevance of the project to women, peace, and security	10 points
Degree of alumni involvement	10 points
Participation and support from local partners	10 points
Evaluation and impact of the project	10 points
Sustainability	10 points
Communication, media and outreach Plan	10 points
Budget and budget narrative	20 points
Total possible points	100

TIPS FOR CREATING A STRONG PROPOSAL

Make your proposal stand out! Winning AEIF projects demonstrate innovation by tackling a new issue, using a unique approach, working with a different group of people, or performing the project in a different location than other projects. The strategies and questions below are designed to help you create a strong proposal!

Purpose and Summary, Description, and Implementation Plan: Precisely explain what your project is about. When developing the purpose, summary, description, and implementation plan, you should aim to make all descriptions clear, concise, and compelling.

To write your narrative, consider the following questions:

- What is your project and why is it important?
- What change will your project affect?
- Who is your target audience (are you trying to reach youth; a specific professional sector; disadvantage communities, etc.?)
- How many people will it reach?
- Are you carrying out an awareness campaign, training, mentoring program, etc.?
- What impact or changes will you see because of the project?
- Who are your partners? What responsibilities will each team member and partner have?
- What major steps and activities will you undertake to make your project happen?

Relevance of the project to women, peace, and security: AEIF 2020 will provide resources for alumni-led projects around the world that advance women's and girls' safety and their meaningful participation in peace and security processes. Throughout your proposal, you will need to demonstrate how your project will strengthen the role of women as agents of peace, reconciliation, development, growth and/or stability. In developing your project, you should keep in mind the safety of alumni, including unintended impacts your project may have on their security.

Degree of alumni involvement: Projects must include **at least two (2) alumni team leaders**. More than two alumni may comprise the team, however, the minimum is two. As the team leaders, the alumni must be closely involved in project planning, implementation, etc. You should ensure that the proposal includes the following information for each alumni team member: first name, last name, e-mail address, exchange program, and country of citizenship. In the proposal, you'll need to explain the roles and responsibilities of each member of the alumni team. Remember, alumni who are U.S. citizens may not submit an application, but they may be part of a team.

Participation and support from local partners: Buy-in and support from the community is important for the success of a project! The involvement of local partners is a strong sign that there is community support and that you are engaging a broad array of experts. List and describe non-alumni partners and the role, resources, or services they will provide to your project (i.e. subject matter experts, community centers, academic institutions, businesses, local/national government, non-governmental organizations, American Spaces). If you don't have an existing relationship with the partner(s), explain how you will establish the partnership.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities take place and at the end of the project. Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies the intended outcomes and what you plan to achieve with the project, 2) gives clear descriptions of

how each outcome will be measured, 3) identifies when the outcomes will be measured, and 4) explains how outcomes will be collected (such as surveys, interviews, or focus groups). Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes.

Sustainability: AEIF funds can only take your project so far. If implementation is successful, what are ways that your project will continue to make a positive impact? How do you plan to continue this project beyond this initial funding year?

Communication, media, and outreach plan: How will you promote your project to the public and beneficiaries? Include social media, websites, print news, or other forms of media you will use to share information about your project. Interim and final reporting is required for winning AEIF projects. Please be prepared to develop a reporting plan to share information about the success/impact of your project.

Budget: All budgets must be submitted using only the **AEIF 2020 budget form**. The U.S. embassy or consulate can provide you with the form when they explain their process for the country-specific AEIF 2020 competition. Other budget formats will not be accepted, and the project will be deemed ineligible.

Alumni are allowed to request between US \$5,000 to US \$25,000. Consider carefully the amount of funds you will need to implement your project. There is no need to go for the full US \$25,000 if that is not necessary to achieve the impact you are seeking. Smaller projects that require less funding are as worthy as larger projects. You might also want to consider running a small-scale pilot project before fully rolling out a larger project.

Please note that items valued at US \$200 or more must be itemized. Related costs should not be lumped together. For example, travel, accommodations, and meals for a speaker should be three separate line items. The table below provides guidance on filling out the budget form:

1. Venue Costs	Reasonable costs based on local environment for renting space for project-related activities. Look for donated space first (American space and academic institutions often donate or discount venues). Consider negotiating deals to include coffee breaks, lunch, presentation equipment, or modest supplies, and include this information in the budget justification.
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2. Promotional Items and Advertising	Promotional items that you will use to amplify the project. Break down promotion and advertising, clearly indicating what you will get in return for costs incurred (i.e. number of ads, on which platforms, and at which times). Consider cost share or free online tools for graphic design work. Funding used for the creation of websites will need to be strongly justified.
3. Meals & Beverages	Reasonable requests for snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and meals if essential to the program (i.e. a working lunch is acceptable, but a cocktail reception is not). Break down meals by the cost per person per meal per day.
4. Speaker Honorarium or Trainer Fees	Speaker: Maximum of US\$200 per day for a full day of programming. Trainer: Maximum US\$200 per full day or \$25 per hour. Preparation and follow-up costs are acceptable and should be itemized at the same rate. Consider asking your fellow alumni to provide their expertise as in-kind support for the project (i.e. cost share).
5. Lodging and per diem	In-country and intraregional airfare, meals, lodging, and local travel (i.e. taxi, bus, train). Indicate if lodging is single or dual occupancy and the duration of stay and one-way or roundtrip fares.
6. Travel	In-country and intraregional air fare or local travel costs (via car, bus, train, etc.). Please specify the mode of transportation, who will travel, the destination/arrival points, and if the cost covers round-trip or one-way travel. Travel to the U.S. will not be covered as all projects must take place outside of the U.S.
7. Supplies, Materials, and Equipment	General office supplies, software, fuel, small equipment such as laptops, projector, etc., and expendable material (i.e. paint or paper). When possible, rent rather than purchase equipment. Indicate what you will do with purchased equipment after the project concludes.
8. Other	List any items that do not apply to the categories above. <i>Be specific!</i> Commonly cited items are administrative costs and monitoring and evaluation, which require details and cost breakdown. It is allowable to include indirect costs incurred for the benefit of the project such as administrative and overhead costs. This amount should not exceed 10% of the total proposed budget and should not include salaries for team members.

Budget Justification: Budgets should be accompanied by a narrative description known as a budget justification. In the narrative, you will explain what the numbers in the budget form represent, how you calculated them, and why you need to incur them for your project. Be sure to explain any unusual circumstances or requests. This information will help the reviewer understand your costs to determine if they are reasonable.

Cost Share: Your budget justification is also an opportunity to explain financial support from other sources (“cost share”). Examples of cost shared items are in-kind support (services, labor, supplies/equipment, or volunteers), a business contributing food for your event, an organization offering a venue at a discount or free of charge, an NGO sponsoring an activity, an expert donating time to facilitate a seminar, etc. Proposals with cost shared items will be considered more competitive.

Accuracy is important! Double check that your numbers in the narrative match those in the Excel budget form!

APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION

The Public Affairs Section at U.S. embassies will submit the top AEIF proposal(s) for their country to the global AEIF 2020 competition. Once the ECA Office of Alumni Affairs has completed its screening and rating to ensure eligibility, it will convene a panel of ECA and regional experts to rank and recommend applications for funding. The Washington D.C. review panels will rate all technically eligible applications using the point-based system outlined above. We aim to announce semi-finalists by July 2020. Semi-finalists will work closely with the Public Affairs Sections to facilitate funding.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY PROJECT IS RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING?

Once the AEIF 2020 Selection Committee has determined projects that are recommended for funding, the Public Affairs Section at your local U.S. embassy or consulate will contact those teams to finalize any programmatic and budget details. To be eligible to receive your funding, all **organizations** must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet, as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. **Individuals** are not required to have a DUNS number or be registered in SAM.gov, however, check with the U.S. embassy or consulate in your country for country-specific requirements.

Reporting Requirements: Award recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify the frequency of report submissions. We want to learn about the impact of your project so please send in final reports! And don't forget to post updates on your social media channels, tagging **#ExchangeAlumni** and **#AEIF**.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about the process, we encourage you to contact the Public Affairs Section and/or Alumni Coordinator at the embassy or consulate in your country (<https://www.usembassy.gov/>). Please contact them first to inquire about AEIF as they will have specific information about the competition. Only if you are unable to contact the Public Affairs Section or have additional questions, please reach out to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at aeif@state.gov. Good luck!