



ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT INNOVATION FUND 2022

APPLICATION GUIDE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTIONS

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

Table of Contents

- [Overview](#)
- [Who is Eligible to Apply?](#)
- [AEIF 2022 Timeline](#)
- [What to Consider Prior to Submission](#)
- [How Many Projects Can Be Submitted During the Application Cycle?](#)
- [How to Submit your Proposal/s](#)
- [Budget](#)
- [Monitoring and Evaluation](#)
- [Reporting](#)

Appendix

- [Best Practices](#)
- [Proposal Evaluation Criteria](#)
- [AEIF Monitoring and Evaluation Template](#)
- [Submission Form Preview](#)
- [Important Links](#)

If you have any questions not covered in the guide, contact your RAC in the Office of Alumni Affairs:

- AF & NEA: Melaney Monreal Starling (Monrealstarlingml@state.gov) and Samira Omarshah (Omarshahsl@state.gov)

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

- EAP: Jason Thornton (ThorntonJA@state.gov)
- EUR: Marion Lange (Langem2@state.gov)
- SCA: Matt Bikoff (BikoffM@state.gov)
- WHA: Amelia Carvalho (Carvalhoaj@state.gov)

Overview

The 2022 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) promotes a post-driven alumni engagement opportunity, offering posts flexibility in collaborating with alumni teams to develop public service- oriented projects that directly support their individual Mission goals and foreign policy objectives. This annual funding opportunity is designed to amplify the return on the investment of the U.S. government in exchange programs. Pending availability of funds, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) will review and recommend proposals for funding twice a year.

Goals and Objectives

AEIF is designed to increase the impact of the U.S. government’s investment in exchange participants and programs by helping alumni develop and implement projects that support U.S. foreign policy objectives, promote shared interests, and benefit local communities.

All AEIF projects must achieve U.S. foreign policy goals, ICS goals, or other mission priorities.

In addition, AEIF projects must address at least one of the following:

- 1) Bring alumni together from different exchange programs to build or expand an alumni network capable of working together on common interests and increase regional and global collaboration of alumni.
- 2) Strengthen the relationship between alumni and the U.S. government to work together on activities that address mutual goals and challenges.
- 3) Support alumni as they develop their leadership capacity and implement projects in their communities.

Proposals should be in the range of \$10,000 to \$40,000. Regions and Missions can cap their maximum limit to be less than \$40,000, to allow for country and regional contexts in which less funding may be required. The Office of Alumni Affairs (ECA/P/A) will consider proposals outside of this range on a case-by-case basis and only after consultation with the Regional Alumni Coordinator (RAC).

For the AF region only: This year, there will be designated funds for YALI Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumni from the 2021 cohort, outside of the regular AEIF funding, of up to \$10,000 for single country projects, and \$15,000 for multi-country projects. See the eligibility requirements section for more information on this Fellowship specific opportunity. **All other guidance for the 2021 Mandela Washington Fellowship cohort specific opportunity will follow the overarching regular AEIF competition.**

Who Is Eligible to Apply?

- Alumni who participated in a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program.
- Alumni Associations from countries with current U.S. representation.
- Public Diplomacy Sections partnering with alumni in support of Mission goals.

Application requirements:

- The proposed project identifies and supports Mission priorities through public service-oriented activities.
- The proposed project involves **at least two** U.S. Government-sponsored exchange program alumni and needs to specify a team lead. (All alumni involved in the project will need to be identified as well as verified by post prior to submission of the project proposal. Any non-alumni team members need to be included as well.)
- Applications from Alumni Associations will need to specify a team lead.
- U.S. citizen alumni may be included on alumni teams; however, the team must have at least two non-U.S. citizen exchange program alumni.

AF Region Only - 2021 Mandela Washington Fellowship Specific AEIF Component:

- In addition to the aforementioned requirements, all projects must be led by an alumnus(a) from the 2021 Mandela Washington Fellowship cohort. All other team members may be from any U.S. government-sponsored exchange program and cohort.

AEIF 2022 Timeline

AEIF 2022 will run between November 2021 and May 2022 and allow posts to submit proposals in two rounds. Proposal packages can be submitted with the following two deadlines in mind:

- First Deadline: **February 25, 2022**
- Second Deadline: **May 6, 2022**

2021 Mandela Washington Fellowship Cohort Submission Deadline:

- **February 25, 2022**

The AEIF review committee, which includes your Regional Alumni Coordinator and Regional Bureau, will review the application package using the evaluation criteria found in the appendix section of this document.

If your proposal/s is selected for funding:

- Pending funding availability, the RAC will revert back to post with conditions of funding, including any recommendations of project proposal/budget adjustments.
- Once required conditions of funding are met, and pending availability of funds, RACs will engage posts to begin the process to transfer ECA funds to post to issue the grant to the grantee. ECA's Office of Alumni Affairs will not issue grants directly to your grantee.

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

- RACs will request the grantee’s full legal name and the Federal Award Information Number (FAIN) for each grant, if there are multiple grantees.
- The RAC will revert back to post with the Fiscal Data and the Reporting Form Template.
- Posts will have 45 days to obligate funds and have grant recipients sign and countersign once the funding cable is released. Failure to obligate funds within the 45-day window may lead to forfeiture of funding.
- Reporting is mandatory and will affect your ability to receive future AEIF funding.

If your proposal/s is not selected for funding:

- The RAC will share the funding decision and feedback from the review panel.

What to Consider Prior to Submission?

AEIF 2022 is an **internal funding opportunity**, not a public competition. ECA will not accept proposals directly from alumni. It is up to posts, in consultation with regional PD offices, whether to conduct a call for proposals from alumni (i.e., NOFO) or work with specific alumni or groups to craft policy-specific proposals. A smaller grant often allows alumni and/or posts to implement smaller, but worthy projects, or to pilot larger projects before roll-out.

The project proposal must include the involvement of **at least two alumni** or **an alumni association**. Proposals may request from \$10,000 to \$40,000 in funding. Requests outside of this range will be considered on a case-by-case basis and only after consultation with the RAC.

Prior to submission, posts are encouraged to send a short project summary (three to five sentences) describing the scope of the project and the estimated budget request to their RAC for feedback to help determine the competitiveness of the project idea.

Should your Public Diplomacy Section choose to conduct a national call for proposals, you must create an internal timeline that will allow you to submit your final proposal/s by the February 25 or May 6, 2022, deadline. A sample Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) that posts can customize to fit the requirements of your national call for proposals is available on the [SharePoint site](#).

A note on COVID-19 and participant safety: Please remember to prioritize the safety of alumni and the feasibility of the project activities, including unintended impacts such grants may have on their security. Consider the status of COVID-19 in your country when planning your project to accommodate for any restrictions (i.e., curfews, lockdown, purchase of PPE or reasonable technology costs for virtual programming, etc.). If projects cannot be sustained upon the completion of the grant, they should be able to wind down without harming beneficiaries.

How many project proposals can be submitted during the application cycle?

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

The AEIF 2022 competition follows a tiered submission approach which takes into account the size of the Mission. During the application cycle from November 1, 2021, to May 6, 2022:

- Missions with **one** post (U.S. Embassy) can submit up to two proposals;
- Missions with **two** posts (U.S. Embassy plus one U.S. Consulate) can submit up to three proposals; and
- Missions with **three or more** posts (U.S. Embassy plus two or more U.S. Consulates) can submit up to five proposals.

The application cycle has two deadlines: February 25, 2022, and May 6, 2022.

The Alumni Office strongly encourages early submissions.

Multi-post missions who intend to submit proposals up to the maximum allowable number, need to split up their submissions between the two deadlines.

Example one: Mission X has four posts (U.S. Embassy plus three U.S. Consulates) and plans to submit the maximum allowable number of five proposals. Mission X will need to submit two of the proposals by February 25 and three proposals by May 6 (or the other way around). **No more than three proposals per submission round are allowed.**

Example two: Mission Y has two posts (U.S. Embassy plus one Consulate) and plans to submit the maximum allowable number of three proposals. Mission Y will need to submit one proposal by February 25 and two proposals by May 6 (or the other way around). **No more than two proposals per submission round are allowed.**

Missions with only the U.S. Embassy present can submit their two allowable proposals for either submission deadline.

Size of Mission	Allowable # of Proposals	When to submit?
U.S. Embassy + two or more U.S. Consulates (3+ posts)	5	Split up submissions into the two rounds 2-3 or 3-2
U.S. Embassy + one U.S. Consulate (2 posts)	3	Spilt up submissions into the two rounds 1-2 or 2-1
U.S. Embassy only (1 post)	2	Submit in either round 0-2, 2-0, or 1-1

How to submit your proposal/s:

This year submission packages need to be submitted via [SharePoint](#). **Proposals submitted via email will not be considered.**

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

A U.S. Embassy/Consulate submission form in SharePoint will need to be filled out by the Public Diplomacy Section. The submission form will collect contact data, the Mission's ICS goals supporting the project, and PDIP alignment information. Please include a short project capsule.

When submitting the proposal package on SharePoint, please attach the completed AEIF 2022 proposal as a **WORD** document and the completed AEIF 2022 budget form as an **EXCEL** document. **Only complete proposal packages using the required forms submitted via SharePoint will be considered for review.**

What to include in your submission:

- [U.S. Embassy/Consulate Submission Form](#) - Required
- AEIF 2022 Proposal Form ([Template in WORD available on SharePoint](#)) - Required
- AEIF 2022 Budget Form ([Template in EXCEL available on SharePoint](#)) - Required
- Additional support materials like workshop agendas, curricula, or previous pilot projects connected to your submission - Optional

Please note: When submitting the proposal form and budget form, please use the following naming convention for the titles of the documents: **AEIF22_Country_Project Title**.

Example Proposal Form: AEIF22_Canada_Inclusive STEAM Curricula.docx

Example Budget Form: AEIF22_Canada_Inclusive STEAM Curricula_Budget.xlsx

Budget

Proposals may request funds from \$10,000 to \$40,000. Posts should work closely with alumni to ensure budgets are reasonable and realistic within the country context. Please use the Alumni Office approved budget template. The template incorporates sections for the budget justification narrative as well as a second tab providing instructions on what to include in the various budget categories.

Cost Share: Examples include in-kind support (services, labor, supplies/equipment, or volunteers), a business contributing food, 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. We encourage all proposals to include some form of cost sharing.

A note on reasonable costs: During the development and review of proposals at post, please make sure cost categories are reasonable. Project management costs should not be more than 30% of the total requested budget amount. Project management costs include fees for speakers, trainers, and consultants. We also encourage posts to closely monitor costs budgeted for supplies, advertising, and equipment. Encourage alumni to rent versus purchase if it is more cost-efficient. Lodging costs should be for program activities during the project and not for long term rent for project team members. Travel costs need to take into account the most economic means of travel.

Supported Activities and Costs

AEIF 2022 can support the following budget items:

- Intra-regional or in-country transportation
- Rental of venues for project activities
- PPE and sanitizing equipment
- Meals/refreshments integral to the project (i.e., working lunch for a meeting)
- Reasonable costs to support virtual programming (i.e., subscription to Zoom, WebEx, camera/microphones for virtual meetings, mailing services, etc.)
- Trainer or speaker honoraria expenses (i.e., maximum \$200/day fee, travel, lodging, per diem)
- Reasonable equipment and materials
- Communications and publicity materials, such as manuals or project advertisements

Not Supported Activities and Costs

AEIF 2022 will **not** support the following budget items:

- Any airfare to/from the United States and its territories
- Activities that take place in the United States and its territories
- Staff salaries, office space, and overhead/operational expenses
- Large items of durable equipment or construction programs
- Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments not integral to the project, or entertainment
- Academic or scientific research
- Charitable or development activities
- Provision of direct social services to a population
- Individual scholarships
- Social travel/visits
- Gifts or prizes
- Duplication of existing programs
- Institutional development of an organization
- Venture capital, for-profit endeavors, or charging a fee for participation in the project
- Support for specific religious activities
- Fund-raising campaigns
- Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is an integral part of project management. A well designed and executed M&E plan will provide posts and alumni with quantifiable information on the progress and desired outcome of the project. Did the time and resources invested in the project move the needle on priority issues identified at post? Did post's collaboration with alumni result in new ways of engaging with hard-to-reach communities? Answers to questions like these will help posts with building a robust alumni engagement strategy supporting Mission's ICS goals. The AEIF application form incorporates an easy to follow-template and is a mandatory part of the application process. A copy of the template can be previewed in the Appendix section.

Reporting

AEIF grantees will be required to submit program reports. The grant document should specify a reporting schedule with target dates set by post in the award specifics section. Establishing a reporting schedule will provide you with an outstanding opportunity to learn about the progress of the planned program activities and understand the impact of the project.

Public Diplomacy Sections are encouraged to report on the progress of the project to their RAC. While the project is ongoing, we encourage you to share with us any events or activities through email or social media. Please tag **@InternationalExchangeAlumni (Facebook)**, **@ExchangeAlumni (Twitter and LinkedIn)** and **@VoicesofExchange (Instagram)** and add **#AEIF2022** and **#ExchangeAlumni** when posting about AEIF projects and ask AEIF alumni teams to do the same on social media. AEIF small grants have proven to be one of the most effective tools U.S. Missions have to empower alumni overseas to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities. We encourage you to tell the story and to have your alumni teams tell it too!

While we encourage reporting during the project, we require reporting after its completion. Please use the [reporting form](#). Missing reports from previous AEIF competitions will impact your eligibility to receive funds for any future projects.

Appendix

Best Practices

- **Do not** forward the AEIF announcement cable to alumni or post on any social media or websites.
- **Do** let alumni teams know that the project has been recommended for funding (not yet approved for funding) or has not been recommended.
- **Do not** forward any email communication between you and your RAC to alumni project teams. Emails between you and your RAC are internal communication and not for external audiences.
- **Do** work with alumni to address any of the review panel's questions and concerns about the proposal. Send responses and clarifications by email to the RAC as soon as possible. The DC Selection Committee will review the information to ensure it addresses conditions and recommendations. If these conditions are sufficiently addressed, the proposal will likely be approved for final funding.
- **Do not** share information about funding levels with alumni teams until **all** questions about a project proposal and budget have been resolved and you receive the final funding cable from ECA/P/A. As always, the final level of support is contingent upon availability of funds.
- **Do not** make any unauthorized commitments until the final funding amount is approved, i.e., the final funding cable authorizing you to obligate funds has been issued to your post and the grant has been signed and countersigned between post and the grantee.

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

- **Do** amplify your winning team’s project widely for greater awareness to your alumni community and encourage alumni to participate in the AEIF in one of the following rounds.
- **Do** make sure to include the Alumni Office’s social media handles and hashtags (see Reporting section) in your social media posts to spread your success stories to an even wider audience.
- **Do** report back to us! Your future AEIF funding eligibility will depend on it.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The AEIF Selection Committee will use the criteria below to review and evaluate applications.

<p>Relevance to ICS goals and Integration into Mission PDIP</p> <p>The proposal provides sufficient information on how the activities will support the Mission's ICS goals and the U.S. Mission explains how the project supports alumni engagement laid out in the PDIP. The narrative explains any relevant local context or Mission priorities the D.C. Selection Committee may not be aware of in relation to this project and your post. Proposed project ideas must be public diplomacy and public service oriented in nature (i.e., not development or military).</p>
<p>Purpose and Summary, Description, and Implementation Plan</p> <p>When developing the purpose, summary, description, and implementation plan, applicants should aim to make all descriptions clear, concise, and compelling. Reviewers will judge the proposals based on the likelihood of the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the community where it is undertaken. Does the project address an important gap of understanding or need? If the aim of the project is achieved, how will existing knowledge or practice be improved? What audience do the applicants hope to reach with this project? How many will participate? How will they be selected?</p>
<p>Degree of Alumni Involvement</p> <p>Projects must include the involvement of at least two (2) exchange alumni. They may be the project team leaders or collaborate directly with PAS in formulating the project. 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. Applicants should ensure that the proposal includes the following information for each alumni team member: first name, last name, exchange program, country of citizenship, roles and responsibilities, and degree of time spent on the project.</p>
<p>Participation and Support from Local Partners</p> <p>The proposal demonstrates buy-in and support from the community where the project will take place. Local partner involvement is a strong sign that there is community support and that the project will engage a broad array of experts, such as subject matter experts, community centers, academic institutions, businesses, local/national government, non-governmental organizations, American Spaces, etc.</p>

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Project

A monitoring & evaluation (M&E) plan is pivotal to project implementation and important tracking progress towards the project’s objectives and goals. An M&E plan should consider the data needed to effectively monitor progress toward specific outputs and outcomes as well as how that data collection will be accomplished. Well-crafted indicators should be used to understand a program’s progress toward the desired results. An M&E plan should be reviewed for the following:

- Completeness
- Applicability and logic of objectives and indicators
- Clear approach to monitoring
- Adherence to SMART criteria
- Data quality plan
- Capacity to implement plan

Sustainability

Have the applicants considered how the project will continue to have long-term positive impact after the end of the project.

Communication, Media, and Outreach Plan

The project should include a clear plan and timeline for how and when the team will share information about the project. It is important to ensure that the U.S. Embassy gets recognition throughout the process, if circumstances permit.

Budget and Budget Narrative

The budget and narrative justification are sufficiently 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. The results and proposed outcomes justify the total cost of the project. Budget items are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

AEIF Monitoring and Evaluation Template

(This template is incorporated in the AEIF 2022 application form and should NOT be submitted separately.)

AEIF 2022 Monitoring and Evaluation Template						
Goal/s of your project:	Increase the capacity of secondary school teachers to effectively deliver online instruction in country X to support closing the literacy gap in secondary school students					
Objective 1:	Provide training workshops for secondary school teachers on effective use of e-learning tools to improve content delivery and boost student attendance by 50% by the end of school year X.					
Activity	Output	Indicator <i>(what are we measuring)</i>	Desired Outcome <i>(what change do we expect to see)</i>	How we will collect data	When we will collect data	Who will collect data

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

Teacher training workshop on e-learning	Trained 200 teachers in x region on e-learning curriculum development and resource platform	Number of users engaging with content on online resource platform	Increased number of teachers using e-learning tools, higher student attendance, Increased number of teachers engaging with online teaching tools	Tracker user engagement on online platforms, attendance of students at online classrooms, Number of downloads of online material	At start of program, 2-month intervals, end of program	Designated M&E project team member, Online Platform Designer
Objective 2:						
Activity	Output	Indicator <i>(what are we measuring)</i>	Desired Outcome <i>(what change do we expect to see)</i>	How we will collect data	When we will collect data	Who will collect data
Objective 3:						
Activity	Output	Indicator <i>(what are we measuring)</i>	Desired Outcome <i>(what change do we expect to see)</i>	How we will collect data	When we will collect data	Who will collect data
Objective 4:						
Activity	Output	Indicator <i>(what are we measuring)</i>	Desired Outcome <i>(what change do we expect to see)</i>	How we will collect data	When we will collect data	Who will collect data

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

Submission Form Preview

1. Project Title
2. Date
3. Country
4. Region
5. U.S. Embassy or Consulate
6. POC at Post
7. Total Funding Requested
8. Project Capsule. Please summarize your project in four sentences or less.
9. How many alumni project team members are there?
10. What exchange programs did the alumni team members participate in?
11. USG Funds: Was this or a similar project previously funded through USG funds?
12. Regional: Is this a regional (multi-country) project?
13. For regional projects only: Has post been in contact with the partnering post/s for review of this project?
14. For regional projects only: Please list the partner posts.
15. PDO: Has a PDO reviewed proposal for submission?
16. NOFO: Was the AEIF competed via a NOFO?
17. ICS Goals: Please list the ICS goal/s in support of this project.
18. PDIP Alignment: Please explain how this project fits into your alumni engagement and outreach strategy.
19. Post Justification: Please provide any additional information regarding the local context or Mission priorities the DC review committee may not be aware of in relation to this project and your post.
20. Please upload your project proposal (Word) and budget (Excel). Only complete proposal packages using the required templates will be considered.

IMPORTANT LINKS

[Alumni Affairs Office SharePoint Site](#)

[AEIF 2022 SharePoint Site](#)

[U.S. Embassy/Consulate Submission Form](#)

[AEIF 2022 Proposal Form](#)

[AEIF 2022 Budget Form](#)

[AEIF 2022 Reporting Form](#)

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

[AEIF 2022 Graphics](#)

[Monitoring and Evaluation Resource Guide](#)

[Sample NOFO](#)