

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**  
**U.S. MISSION VIETNAM, PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION (PAS)**  
**Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

**Funding Opportunity Title:** U.S. Mission Vietnam PAS Notice of Funding Opportunity  
**Funding Opportunity Number:** PAS-HAN-HCMC-FY24  
**Deadline for Applications:** 11:59 p.m. August 22, 2024  
**Total Award Amount:** \$324,640 - Subject to availability of funding

**A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP) through the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi Public Affairs Section is pleased to announce an open competition for organizations or academic institutions to submit proposals for a cooperative agreement to organize the Mekong Digital Transformation through Education Cooperation (Mekong DigiTEC) activities in the Mekong Sub-Region under the Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP). This program aims to further the pillars of economic connectivity, human resource capacity building, and non-traditional security within the Mekong partner countries Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam and the United States. The grantee will collaborate closely with the Public Affairs Section (PAS) to plan and implement the program.

Please note that the grant will be signed under a federal cooperative agreement. The funding is not eligible for a service agreement. The deadline on August 19 is necessary to provide sufficient time to process and award programs in advance of the end of our fiscal year on September 30, 2024. Please carefully follow all instructions below.

**Purpose of Grants:** The Public Affairs Section (PAS) is seeking proposals to execute a multi-faceted initiative aimed at convening leaders from key higher education institutions and government education officials from MUSP countries. The goal is to foster partnerships and encourage cooperation, particularly in areas such as digital policy, digitalization, cybersecurity, and workforce development for emerging digital and high-tech industries with the involvement of up to 90 participants. The initiative will consist of several components:

- **Online Engagement Forum:** Representatives will convene virtually to identify priority areas for cooperation and discuss institutional needs that regional partnerships could address. The forum will feature facilitated institutional matchmaking and discussions to prepare for the main in-person conference. Speakers should be chosen representing participating countries as well as the United States.
- **In-person Conference:** A two-day conference will be held in Hanoi, featuring thematic working groups focusing on various aspects such as research cooperation, student and faculty exchange, curriculum development, resources, and private sector collaboration. Emphasis will be placed on real-world application and leveraging industry insights into

academic programs. Each working group will be tasked with developing an action plan to foster future cooperation. Additionally, the conference will explore the integration of online training and virtual collaboration into these plans. Conference speakers will include at least one representative from each participating country, which may include Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma. Speakers from the United States or other relevant countries will also be included.

- Project-based Small Grants Program: This program aims to facilitate 5-7 projects with a total of \$75,000 to strengthen regional partnerships as well as promote cooperation bridging academia, government and industry. Small grants will be allocated to support the action plans formulated during the conference, fostering tangible collaborations between educational institutions, government entities, and industry stakeholders.

These activities collectively aim to facilitate meaningful dialogue, promote collaboration, and support the development of concrete initiatives to advance education, digitalization, and workforce development in the MUSP region.

**Audiences:** Faculty, staff, and leadership from higher education institutions in MUSP countries, which may include Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Burma; government officials involved in education and training policy from those countries; and representatives from organizations related to higher education.

**The following types of projects are not eligible for funding:**

- Charitable or development activities without Public Diplomacy relevance;
- Construction projects;
- Fundraising campaigns;
- Lobbying for specific legislation or projects;
- Projects relating to partisan political activity;
- Projects that duplicate existing projects;
- Projects that support specific religious activities; or
- Scientific research; or
- 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:**

Funding authority rests primarily in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Economic Support Funds (ESF).

## **B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

**Length of performance period:** Approximately 18 months from the proposed project start date.

**Number of awards anticipated:** One

**Total award amount:** \$324,640

**Type of Funding:** Fiscal Year 2023 Economic Support Funds (ESF).

**Anticipated period of performance start date:** October 1, 2024

**Anticipated in-person activity start date:** April 2025

Anticipated period of follow-on grants start date: July 2025

**This notice is subject to availability of funding.**

**If approved for funding, it is important to note that the recipient understands that they bear the legal and sole responsibility for taxes and permissions.**

**Funding Instrument Type:** Cooperative Agreement. Cooperative Agreements are different from grants in that PAS staff members are more actively involved in the grant implementation that may include approving a stage of the project before the next stage starts, approving specific individuals and agreeing on the substantive provisions of sub-awards.

**Project Performance Period:** Proposed projects should ideally be planned between October 2024 and April 2026.

## **C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### 1. Eligible Applicants

The Public Affairs Section encourages applications from the United States and Vietnam:

- Registered not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations with programming experience;
- Not-for-profit or governmental educational institutions; or
- Governmental institutions

For-profit or commercial entities are **not eligible** to apply. **Individuals are also not eligible to apply.**

### 2. Cost Sharing or Matching - cost sharing is not required.

### 3. Other Eligibility Requirements

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

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) as well as a valid registration on [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov). Please see Section D.3 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov. SAM registration are all available without a fee.

The SAM.gov Federal Service Desk has resources on:

- Creating an account
- Assigning roles to an account
- Entity Registrations
- Exclusions
- Searching for data in SAM.gov

#### **D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

I. Request additional information and application submission:

Email: [VietnamPASGrants@state.gov](mailto:VietnamPASGrants@state.gov)

II. 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.

##### **Content of Application**

Please ensure:

- 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 8.5 x 11 paper; and
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12-point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

The following documents are **required**:

- a. SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance - organizations)
- b. SF424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)
- c. SF424B for Organizations (Assurances for Non-Construction programs)

- d. Budget Justification Narrative
- e. Proposal (five pages maximum) and budget
- f. 1-page CV or resume of key personnel who are proposed for the program
- g. Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner (if applicable)
- h. Official permission letters, if required for project activities with program partners, for instance.
- i. Proof of entity (if applicable)

### 1. Mandatory application forms

The following documents are required (Note: Please save these PDF files to your computer; open PDFs in the latest version of Adobe Acrobat; please “Enable all Features” when receiving a ‘Protected view’ notification):

- **SF-424** (Application for Federal Assistance – organizations, PDF, 163 KB) or
- **SF-424A** (Budget Information, PDF, 322 KB) – please follow **instructions** (PDF, 181 KB) to complete this form
- **SF-424B** (Assurances for Non-Construction programs, PDF, 89 KB)

**2. Summary Coversheet:** Cover sheet stating the applicant’s name and organization, proposal date, project title, start and end date of the proposed period of performance, and brief purpose of the project.

**3. Proposal** (five pages maximum): The proposal should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

- **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed project, including project objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Introduction to the Organization:** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the project, including information on all previous grants from the U.S. Mission Vietnam and/or U.S. government agencies.
- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise, and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed project is needed.
- **Project Goals and Objectives:** The “goals” describe what the project is intended to achieve. What aspect of the relationship between the U.S. and *Vietnam* will be improved? The “objectives” refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable.
- **Project Activities:** Describe the project activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Program Methods and Design:** A description of how the project is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal.
- **Proposed Project Schedule:** The proposed timeline for the project activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.

- **Key Personnel:** Names, titles, roles, and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the project. What proportion of their time will be used in support of this project?
- **Project Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees.
- **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** This is an important part of successful grants. Throughout the timeframe of the grant, how will the activities be monitored to ensure they are happening in a timely manner, and how will the program be evaluated to make sure it is meeting the goals of the grant?
- **Future Funding or Sustainability:** Applicant's plan for continuing the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable.

**4. Budget Justification Narrative:** After filling out the SF-424A Budget (above), use a separate document to describe each of the budget expenses in detail. See section **H. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions** below for further information.

**5. Attachments:**

- One-page CV or resume of key personnel who are proposed for the project.
- Letters of support from project partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner.
- Official permission letters, if required for project activities with program partners, for instance.
- Documentations that the organization is a registered entity.
- Bank account details and bank verification.

III. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

**Required Registrations:**

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration with the SAM.gov. A 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.

**Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required for federal assistance applications.**

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for subgrantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

**Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.**

- Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- Please note that as of November 2022 and February 2022 respectively, organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code or CAGE code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities. If an applicant organization is mid registration and wishes to remove a CAGE or NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket (“incident”) with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at [www.fsd.gov](http://www.fsd.gov) using the following language: “I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain a CAGE or NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated.”

**Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should follow the below instructions:**

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

**Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoD in addition to Department of State should follow the below instructions:**

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:

NCAGE Homepage:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx>

NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):

**Exemptions**

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if:

- An applicant’s identity must be protected due to potential endangerment of their mission, their organization’s status, their employees, or individuals being served by the applicant.
- For an applicant, if the Federal awarding agency makes a determination that there are exigent circumstances that prohibit the applicant from receiving a unique entity identifier and completing SAM registration prior to receiving a federal award. In these instances, Federal awarding agencies must require the recipient to obtain a unique entity identifier and complete SAM registration within 30 days of the Federal award date.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

#### IV. Submission Dates and Times

The Public Affairs Section will accept proposals by the following date: 11:59 pm, August 22.

Proposals received by [VietnamPASgrants@state.gov](mailto:VietnamPASgrants@state.gov).

#### Funding Restrictions

Award funds cannot be used for construction projects, vehicle purchases, real estate purchases, or other similar purposes. Also, award funds cannot be used to finance the standard operation of the applicant.

#### V. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants must send all inquiries about the status of their application to [VietnamPASGrants@state.gov](mailto:VietnamPASGrants@state.gov).

### E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

#### 1. Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and rated by a review panel composed of members from relevant sections across the mission on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below. The criteria listed are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of an application.

**Organizational capacity and record on previous grants:** The organization has expertise in its stated field and PAS is confident of its ability to undertake the project in Vietnam. This includes a financial management system and a bank account.

**Familiarity with local environment** The organization has expertise and experience in obtaining the require permissions or approvals to implement project activities in Vietnam.

**Quality and feasibility of the program idea:** The program idea is well developed, with detail about how project activities will be carried out. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline.



**Goals and objectives:** Goals and objectives are clearly stated, and project approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results.

**Embassy priorities:** Applicant has clearly described how stated goals are related to and support U.S. Mission Vietnam's priority areas or target audiences.

**Budget:** The budget justification is 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.

**Monitoring and evaluation plan:** Applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The project includes output and outcome indicators and shows how and when those will be measured. A monitoring and evaluation plan should consider the data needed to effectively monitor progress and review for the following:

- Completion
- Applicability and logic of objectives and indicators
- Clear approach to monitoring and data collection methods
- Frequency and timeline of monitoring and evaluation
- Feasibility of baselines and targets
- Data quality plan
- Capacity to implement the program

An example of a Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan in the proposal can include but not limited to the collection of the following data:

- **Demographics:** The grantee collects demographic information on all participants, including gender, age range, home district, level of formal education, or profession, etc.
- **Grantee Interviews:** The grantee includes plans to conduct interviews with a representative sample of participants. The purpose of the interviews is to determine the change beneficiaries experienced, in their opinion, from participation in the project. Interviewers must explain the purpose of the interview and protect the confidentiality of any beneficiaries who agree to be interviewed. The grantee translates summaries of key interviews into English to be used as success stories.
- **Beneficiary network created:** At the end of the program activity, the selected grantee sends a follow-up survey at least three months after the project ends to determine how, if at all, the participant is utilizing knowledge and skills gained from participating in the project.

**Sustainability:** Project activities will continue to have positive impact after the end of the project. This can include building institutional partnerships during the grant program.

## 2. Review and Selection Process

A Technical Grants Review Panel will evaluate all eligible applications. A second Grants Review Panel will evaluate all technically eligible shortlisted applications.

U.S. Mission Vietnam strives to ensure that each application receives a balanced evaluation by the two separate panels. A PAS panel will determine the eligibility of each submitted proposal to ensure its applications are technically eligible for this NOFO and are reviewed against the same seven criteria, which include quality of project idea, project planning/ability to achieve objectives, institutional record and capacity, inclusive programming, cost effectiveness, multiplier effect/sustainability, and project monitoring and evaluation.

The Grants Review Panel will evaluate how the application addresses the NOFO request, U.S. foreign policy goals, and the overall priority needs of the Embassy. The Grants Review Panel may provide conditions and recommendations on applications to enhance the proposed project, which the applicant must address before further consideration of the award. To ensure effective use of the funds, conditions or recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and project activities.

## **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 project 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.

Whether your proposal has been selected or not, you will be notified of the decision.

If not selected, you will receive a declination letter within four months after you submitted your proposal.

If selected, you will receive an invitation to negotiation (please note this does not constitute a promise for funding, but rather an invitation to discuss funding) or a confirmation letter, pending funds availability.

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:** Payments will be made as needed to carry out the project activities.

Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified via email.

## 2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

**Terms and Conditions:** 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 200, 2 CFR 600, Certifications and Assurances, and the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, all of which are available at:  
<https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>

**Note the U.S. flag branding and marking requirements in the Standard Terms and Conditions.**

## 3. Reporting

**Reporting Requirements:** Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award provisions will specify the submission date.

Please note: The due dates for reports are in the award provisions. Delays in reporting may result in delays of payment approvals, and failure to provide required reports may jeopardize the recipient's ability to receive future U.S. government funds.

## G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact PAS at:  
[VietnamPASGrants@state.gov](mailto:VietnamPASGrants@state.gov).

Note: We do not provide any pre-consultation for application-related questions that are addressed in the NOFO. Once an application has been submitted, U.S. State Department officials and staff — both in the Department and at embassies overseas — may not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process is completed.

## H. OTHER INFORMATION

### Guidelines for Budget Justification

**Personnel:** Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the project, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the project.

**Travel:** Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this project. If the project involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

**Equipment:** Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property that is required for the project, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the project), and costs at least \$5,000 per unit.

**Supplies:** List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the project. If an item costs more than \$5,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

**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 project activities.

**Other Direct Costs:** Describe other costs directly associated with the project, 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 project 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 percent of the modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68.

"Cost Sharing" refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Mission Vietnam. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers' time and donated venues. Cost sharing does not apply to Fixed Amount Awards.

**Alcoholic Beverages:** Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.