

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)
Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Announcement Type: New Announcement

Funding Opportunity Title: Emerging Cuban Leaders

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 19.750

Funding Amount: \$1,033,086

Number of Awards: One (1)

Cost Sharing Requirement: Not Required

Assistance Type: Grant
Funding Type: Discretionary

Authority: Foreign Assistance Act of 1961
Source of Funding: Economic Support Funds
Funding Activity Category: Democracy and Governance

NOFO Issuance Date: June 6, 2019

Closing Date for Submission of Applications: Complete proposal packages must be submitted through www.grants.gov by July 26, **11:59 pm EST**

Electronic Requirement: Yes
E-mailed, faxed or mailed proposal packages, or individual documents, that failed to transmit during application submission will **NOT** be considered.

Deadline for Receipt of Questions: July 12, 2019, 5:00 pm, EST

Eligibility Category: U.S.-based non-profit/non-governmental organizations having a 501(c) (3) status with the IRS; overseas non-governmental non-profit organizations; Foreign Public Entities (FPEs), U.S. and overseas institutions of higher education, and Public International Organizations (PIOs).

For-profit commercial firms are **not** eligible to apply in

Type of Applicant:	response to this NOFO. No exceptions. Organizations. Individuals are not eligible to apply.
Number of Applications:	One (1) per applicant organization <u>Note:</u> Organizations may form consortia and submit a combined proposal. However, only one organization may be designated as the lead applicant. The lead applicant must meet the eligibility criteria listed in this NOFO.
Anticipated Award Date:	The successful applicant will receive notification within approximately four to five weeks of the closing of this announcement. The U.S. Department of State is under no obligation to fund any of the proposals submitted under this funding opportunity.
Est. Project Start Date:	August/September 2019
Est. Project End Date:	September 2022 (Maximum)
Project Duration:	Up to 36 months but not fewer than 24 months, based on proposed activity schedule

This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov and may be amended. Answers to questions from potential applicants will be posted as an attachment to this NOFO. Applicants should regularly check the www.grants.gov website for the most recent information pertaining to this NOFO. **Department of State bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes associated with electronic submissions via www.grants.gov. Incomplete application packages will not be considered.** Missing e-mailed, faxed or mailed documents will NOT be considered.

Applicants must provide a Unique Entity Identifier, or Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS), when submitting application on www.grants.gov in response to this NOFO.

SAM.gov registration (www.sam.gov) is required. **Applicants that do not have a valid DUNS number and completed www.sam.gov registration will NOT be eligible for consideration.**

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application package has been received by Grants.gov in its **entirety**. Incomplete applications will be considered **ineligible**. Individual e-mailed or faxed documents that failed to transmit during application submission will **not** be considered.

The decision for the final eligibility and award determination rests with the U.S. Department of State Grants Officer.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Department of State’s Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) announces a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to support emerging individual Cuban leaders, particularly within civil society.

Pending availability of funds, WHA may consider adding funds to the award. WHA intends to support one (1) award as a result of this NOFO.

The Department of State reserves the right to fund any or none of the proposals submitted and reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase the budget in accordance with the needs of the project and the availability of funds.

The Federal award signed by the Department of State Grants Officer is the **only** authorizing document.

This NOFO consists of the following sections:

- I. Funding Opportunity Description
- II. Award Information and Application Evaluation and Scoring
- III. Eligibility Information
- IV. Agency Contacts

Eligible organizations interested in submitting an application are encouraged to review this NOFO thoroughly to understand the type of project sought and the application submission requirements and review process as outlined in this NOFO.

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

U.S. foreign assistance for Cuba seeks to empower Cubans to freely determine their own futures by increasing human capacity, promoting community-level engagement, and expanding civil society networks. Since 1996, the United States has provided assistance to increase the flow of information on democracy and human rights to Cuba through a variety of U.S. and foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The U.S. Department of State has engaged with independent civil society groups on education, communication, and civic issues. The Department of State’s Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) seeks to build upon these earlier, successful capacity-building efforts and provide professional development opportunities to current and emerging civil society and community leaders through, among other options, medium- to long-term off-island training and site visits. Individuals involved in civil society in Cuba have had few models to follow as they grow to serve the needs of their communities.

To support further progress, the U.S. Department of State has allocated \$1,033,086 in funds

appropriated under the Economic Support Fund heading of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2018 (Div. K, P.L. 115-141) for a project that supports the ability of emerging Cuban leaders. It does so by training and elevating the skillsets of independent actors and organizations in Cuba to coordinate among themselves on the island, to advocate for democratic principles, and to convey the needs of the Cuban people to a broader audience. Assistance to Cuba is governed by a complex series of statutory and other restrictions. The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (also referred to as the “Helms-Burton Act,” P.L. 104-114) authorizes the furnishing of assistance and other support for individuals and independent NGOs to support democracy-building efforts for Cuba. All activities must be implemented in accordance with the relevant legislation. These funds cannot support or fund Cuban government entities’ involvement in the program implementation. The individuals who apply to participate in this professional development program should be made aware of the program’s sponsorship and funding source.

PROJECT GOALS

The purpose of the WHA-funded Emerging Cuban Leaders project is to allow the participants to establish themselves in Cuba as professional resources for grassroots efforts in democracy and human rights promotion and further open communications across the island and internationally. Project alumni will have the tools to promote causes by attracting wider audiences, communicating messages effectively to other leaders and partners, and mobilizing independent actors within civil society to promote freedom of expression and assembly.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

WHA seeks project proposals that will develop the skills and abilities of a new generation of independent leaders to bolster Cubans’ abilities to develop independent civil society communities and express ideas regarding human rights and democracy to peers and those outside Cuba. This cadre of professionals will model effective leadership of civil society organizations that effectively advocate for public interests, promote community engagement, support diversity, and further democratic practices in Cuba.

In order to fulfill this purpose and meet this goal, this project will build the professional capacity of 25-40 young Cubans, ages 20-35, to advance community-focused causes related to human rights and democracy. The project will provide an in-depth training and development project in the United States or a single third country for up to four cohorts. Each cohort will last no more than six months to a year in duration, over a three-year period, depending on the proposed activity schedule. Participants will learn to function professionally and effectively, communicate new ideas to diverse audiences, and learn training skills in order to conduct future training among their peers. Project proposals should outline processes to ensure that off-island opportunities align with the specific thematic interests of applicants from a broad cross-section of civil society, such as journalists with a media outlet, political activists with party campaigns, community organizers with grassroots organizations, etc.

Project proposals must be centered around furthering democracy and governance goals, but may be customized to best suit the proposing organization’s project and participant age-group, and should include the elements outlined below.

1. Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment Plan and Partners:

Applicants for the administration of this project will propose a robust recruitment and selection plan that will include:

- a) Outreach that will generate a strong pool of qualified participant candidates
- b) Promotional materials that will be developed and disseminated
- c) Details on engaging geographically, racially/ethnically, and socio-economically diverse candidates
- d) Participant selection criteria and a candidate screening process

Staff of the implementing organization **should not plan to travel to Cuba** to conduct on-island recruitment. Therefore, applicants must provide detailed plans to recruit and interview candidates from the United States or a third country. Prior to final participant selection, the implementing organization will recommend the principal and alternate participants to WHA.

Participants:

Project participants will be Cuban citizens and residents who demonstrate an interest in communications, and/or other leadership roles. As emerging leaders, participants may be university students or young professionals. The participants should also demonstrate the aptitude (maturity, independence, self-reliance, etc.) for success in a project abroad. Participants must demonstrate a stated desire to return to and work in the management of independent organizations and/or activities in Cuba. The implementing organization's recruitment plan must actively seek a candidate pool representing gender, racial, socio-economic, and geographic diversity in Cuba. The implementing organization(s) must actively recruit women and minorities as participants.

Location of Activities and Visa Requirements:

The project should be conducted in the United States and/or one third-country location identified by the applicant. Preference may be given to those organizations that have the ability to implement this project in areas not typically visited or inhabited by the Cuban diaspora.

- In the United States: If project activities are to take place in the United States, each participant must be able to receive the appropriate U.S. visa and commit to returning to Cuba upon completion of the project. The applicant organization must demonstrate the capacity to issue the relevant forms to support the participants in obtaining appropriate visas. In addition, all participants in U.S.-based activities must receive intensive English-language training to enable adaptation to life in the United States. For U.S. activities, participants should have basic English language ability when applying, although fluency/advanced skills are not required.
- In a third country: If project activities are to take place outside of the United States in a third country, each participant must be able to receive the appropriate visa(s) and commit to returning to Cuba upon completion of the project. Applicant organizations may propose activities in a third country, but should note that the Department of State will not support holding third-country activities in Venezuela, Nicaragua, or Bolivia. English

language skills are advised, but will not be a requirement if events are to take place outside the United States. The award implementing organization and all sponsored participants must comply with all visa regulations in the relevant country.

The applicant should specify plans for incorporating English- or Spanish-language project activities, as appropriate.

Pre-departure Orientation:

The proposal should describe plans for a substantive pre-departure orientation for participants – any combination of video-conferencing, in-person sessions, written materials (provided in hard copy, USB drives, or CD/DVD), and/or low-bandwidth websites – to effectively prepare for the project. This will include the provision of details on the project components, cross-cultural adjustment, travel and financial matters, terms and conditions of the project, and health insurance. Guidance should also outline what to bring to the project’s host country, how to communicate with home, and other logistical matters.

2. Follow-on with Alumni

Staying engaged with alumni is important for evaluating the success of the project, building a community of independent organizations and actors on the island, and continuing to support alumni in engaging in networks of their professional peers in the United States and in Latin America. Applicant organizations should describe various approaches to facilitate this engagement. All proposed follow-on activities for alumni will be developed in close consultation with WHA and must reflect the goals and objectives of the project. Proposals should include an outline of and timeline for follow-on alumni programming, information on its coordination, and a plan to foster and sustain longer-term linkages with alumni.

3. External Evaluation

Applicants must identify an external evaluator that will complete a comprehensive evaluation of the results of the project, guided by the stated purpose and goals. To the extent possible, given limitations on access to alumni and the time frame of the award, the evaluation should also measure the longer-term impact of the award, including the participants’ abilities to more effectively lead, manage, and grow independent messaging and communications projects or networks in support of democratic principles in Cuba. The proposal must include a detailed plan for this evaluation and costs for the evaluation should be included in the line-item budget.

BUDGET GUIDANCE

The Federal grant amount of \$1,033,086 will support the participation of 25 to 40 emerging leaders in a professional development project over a maximum of three years. In past years, WHA projects have included a cost per participant of \$10,000 to \$14,000, but factors such as the length of the project, cohort size, and activity locations will affect the costs for each participant. The budget will include roundtrip airfare between Cuba and the selected country, room and board, local transportation, provision of orientation and training, and other project-related expenses.

Allowable project costs may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Recruitment and advertising materials and expenses
- Pre-departure orientation expenses
- Passport and visa fees, as necessary, including travel costs for interviews
- Roundtrip airfare between Cuba and the selected project country
- Monthly stipend for room and board
- Winter clothing, if necessary
- Travel between project locations and local transportation (excluding automobile purchases)
- Training expenses (e.g., travel, lodging, meals, materials, honoraria for speakers)
- Health insurance (accident and sickness) – compliant with host-country legislation
- Contingency funds for unexpected travel or other issues
- External evaluation costs

NOTE: Grant funds may not be used for expenses related to participant spouses, children, or family relocation or reunification.

DESIRED RESULTS AND ILLUSTRATIVE INDICATORS

By the end of the project, participants should have the ability to establish themselves in Cuba as professional resources for grassroots efforts in democracy and human rights promotion across the island and internationally. Alumni will have the tools to promote causes by attracting broad audiences, communicating messages effectively to other leaders and partners, and mobilizing independent actors within civil society to promote freedom of expression and assembly.

The applicant will develop a Project Monitoring Plan (PMP) with annual and end-of-project targets and results anticipated for key performance indicators. The following table shows required indicators that must be measured, as well as illustrative targets, that the implementing organization will be responsible for monitoring and reporting during and after the project. The applicant should propose additional outputs, indicators, and/or targets as necessary. WHA will regularly monitor the project's performance to assess whether project activities are on track and targets are being achieved.

Outcome indicators required for the project are provided below. As part of the proposal, the applicant is expected to identify targets for these indicators based on what it can reasonably achieve within the performance period of the project, based on the expected overall project results described above.

<i>Required Outcome Indicators</i>	<i>Targets:</i>
Number of individuals who report acquiring a robust body of knowledge about multiple facets of democratic advocacy.	TBD
Number of individuals who utilize their international experience to elevate independent organizations and civil society across Cuba and in the international community.	TBD

Required output indicators and illustrative targets that should be used for the project are provided below. The applicant should review these and either confirm the illustrative targets or propose alternative targets, as appropriate.

<i>Required Output Indicators</i>	<i>Illustrative targets:</i>
Pre- and post-activity surveys conducted to assess participants' development	Two per cohort
Number of people who have completed USG assisted civic education projects	At least 25
Number of participants who conduct follow-on activities in Cuba to further train colleagues in advocacy skills.	At least 25

The implementing organization will be required to collect baseline data for all the PMP indicators during the first year of the project, as well as pre- and post-activity surveys with each cohort to determine the change in each participant's knowledge, understanding, and skill set. In addition, applicants should define certain terms included in the outcomes and indicators at the very beginning of the project so that it is possible to measure the change during and at the end of the project. Such baseline information will be critical for both monitoring and evaluation of project progress and results.

II. AWARD INFORMATION AND APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SCORING

WHA will issue an award to the applicant whose proposal represents the best value to the U.S. Government on the basis of technical merit, efficient use of U.S. Government funds, and satisfactory organizational capacity.

The Department of State reserves the right to make an award on the basis of initial application received with or without discussion or negotiations. Therefore, applications should contain the applicants' best terms from both cost and technical standpoints.

Assistance to Cuba is governed by a complex series of statutory and other restrictions. The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (also referred to as the "Helms-Burton Act," P.L. 104-114) authorizes the furnishing of assistance and other support for individuals and independent NGOs to support democracy-building efforts for Cuba. All activities must be implemented in accordance with the relevant legislation. These funds cannot support or fund Cuban government entities' involvement in the program implementation. The individuals who apply to participate in this professional development program should be made aware of the program's sponsorship and funding source.

It is Department of State policy that English is the official language and U.S. dollar is the controlling currency. The proposal and related supporting documents must be English and the accompanying budget in U.S. dollars.

WHA will conduct a merit review of all eligible applications as outlined in this NOFO. Applications will be reviewed by an independent review panel consisting of qualified subject matter experts from other Department of State bureaus and offices, U.S. Embassies, or other USG agencies. Each eligible application will be assessed and scored on the review criteria using a 100-point scale. Final approval resides with the U.S. Department of State Grants Officer. The following criteria will serve as a standard against which all **eligible** applications will be reviewed.

The review panel will apply the following criteria when rating proposals:

1. **Quality of Project Idea** (total possible 25 points)
 - The proposal responds to the NOFO and is appropriate in the country context
 - The proposal exhibits originality but is feasible
 - The proposal directly connects proposed activities with the desired outcomes (goals and objectives)
2. **Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives** (total possible 20 points)
 - The proposal provides a detailed work plan of proposed project activities and includes a clear articulation of how these activities will contribute to the overall project's goals and objectives
 - The proposal articulates project activities that are specific, measurable, attainable, and placed in a reasonable time frame (SMART)
3. **Organizational Capability and Record of Performance** (total possible 20 points)
 - The proposal demonstrates an institutional record of previous successfully implemented projects in the target country outlined in this NOFO
 - The proposal articulates past performance and experience in working with relevant host governments, local organizations, and communities. The proposal clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of primary staff under this project
 - The proposal describes the division of labor among the implementing organization and potential implementing partner organization(s) and identifies local partner organization(s) that would assist with implementation, where appropriate
 - Proposal addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders
4. **Cost Effectiveness** (total possible 20 points)
 - The administration of the proposal budget, including salaries and honoraria, are explained and justified for the work involved
 - Proposed costs are reasonable and necessary and linked to program objectives and demonstrate efficient use of U.S. Government funds
5. **PMP** (total possible 10 points)

- The PMP includes narrative explaining how monitoring and evaluation will be carried out and who will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation activities (including potential contracted monitoring and evaluation experts)

6. Sustainability of Impact (total possible 5 points)

- Clearly delineates how impact will be sustained beyond the life of the grant

APPLICATION SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional application submission instructions, including information on required documents and format.

Please follow both the PSI and the NOFO, to ensure that the proposal package submission is in full compliance with the requirements. Proposal submissions that do not meet all of the requirements outlined in this NOFO and PSI will **not** be considered.

FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION:

Issuance of this NOFO does **not** constitute a commitment on the part of the U.S. Department of State to issue an award nor does it commit the U.S. Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. Furthermore, an award cannot be issued until funds have been fully appropriated, allocated, and committed through internal DOS procedures. While it is anticipated that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Pursuant to 2 CFR §200.400 g, it is U.S. Department of State policy **not** to award profit under assistance instruments.

2 CFR §200.501 requires domestic/U.S. non-federal entities that *expend* \$750,000, or more, in federal assistance during the organization's fiscal year to have a single or program-specific audit conducted for that year. In addition, the entity must report the collected audit data elements on the form SF-SAC and submit it to the FAC. Any findings such as material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, or material noncompliance are reported on the SF-SAC.

The Federal award signed by the Grants Officer is the only authorizing document.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

The implementing organization will be required to submit Quarterly Progress and Quarterly Financial Reports (SF-425), unless special conditions apply, describing key activities undertaken during the reporting period towards accomplishment of the stated objectives. Financial Reports provide a means of monitoring expenditures. Financial reports must be submitted in English and in U.S. dollars.

OTHER INFORMATION:

Mandatory disclosures (2 CFR §200.113)

The non-federal entity, implementing organization or applicant for a federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the federal award. Non-federal entities that have received a Federal award including the term and condition outlined in Appendix XII of the 2 CFR 200—Award Terms and Conditions for Implementing Organization Integrity and Performance Matters -- are required to report certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings to www.sam.gov.

Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in §200.338 Remedies for Noncompliance, including suspension or debarment.

Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)

A federal awarding agency, prior to making a federal award, will review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through www.sam.gov (currently FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313). The applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through www.sam.gov and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through www.sam.gov. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance. Applicant organizations must demonstrate adherence to equal opportunity employment practices and commitment to non-discrimination with respect to beneficiaries. Non-discrimination includes equal treatment without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and political affiliation. Applicants are reminded that U.S. Executive Orders and U.S. law prohibits transactions with or support to individuals or organizations associated with terrorism.

Proposals that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative or a designate to terrorist organization or narcotics trafficker, including elected members of government, will NOT be considered. This provision must be included in any sub-awards/sub-contracts issued under the award.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

See the cover page, Eligibility Category.

Applicants should demonstrate expertise with training in sensitive environments. Applicants should also demonstrate in-depth understanding of Cuba cultural contexts and governance structures. Applicants must demonstrate experience and/or understanding of the unique requirements of operation in Cuba or other similar closed societies. Successful applicants will also show a robust ability to plan for emergencies and other contingencies, and to work quickly to mitigate any issues.

WHA encourages applications from potential new partners.

IV. AGENCY CONTACTS

Any prospective applicant desiring an explanation or interpretation of this NOFO must request it in writing by the *deadline for questions* specified on page 1 (cover page). Information given to a prospective applicant concerning this NOFO will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as a 'Questions and Answers' attachment to this NOFO.

Any questions concerning this NOFO should be submitted in writing, by email, to WHAGrants@state.gov along with the project's title as outlined in the NOFO; the funding opportunity number; and applicant's legal name and organizational status.