



IDEAS Program Grant Competition

2025 Request for Proposals

RFP Issuance Date: October 15, 2024
Closing Date/Time: December 12, 2024, 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

The U.S. Department of State’s IDEAS Program is pleased to announce the launch of its 2025 IDEAS grant competition, which assists U.S. colleges and universities in creating and/or expanding their study abroad programming in support of U.S. foreign policy goals. The IDEAS (Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students) Program is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by World Learning.

U.S. colleges and universities are invited to submit applications for projects to create and/or expand outbound study abroad programs and/or resources that align with U.S. foreign policy goals. The 2025 grant competition will award approximately 35 grants of up to \$35,000 each to accredited colleges and universities. This cycle will also provide an opportunity for consortia of U.S. colleges and universities to apply for additional funding for collaborative projects focused on preparing the workforce of the future. Approximately one IDEAS consortium grant of up to \$50,000 will be awarded in this category. More details can be found in [Section 2c](#).

The 2025 Request for Proposals (RFP) process is divided into two phases in order to make the grant competition more accessible and equitable, in particular for lower-resourced institutions whose staff may not have extensive grant-writing experience. In Phase One of the RFP process, U.S. colleges and universities will submit a brief proposal describing the concept and general components of their proposed projects to create, expand, and/or broaden study abroad capacity at their institutions. Successful Phase One applications will describe a high-quality project idea aligned with the eligibility requirements listed on pages 4-5 of this RFP and with the review criteria on pages 6-8. The IDEAS Program will then invite approximately 70 semi-finalist applicants to submit full proposals during Phase Two of the competition.

Phase One of this competition will open on October 15, 2024, and close on December 12, 2024, at 11:59p.m. Eastern Standard Time via the [IDEAS Grant Competition Application Portal](#). Should your institution be unable to access and/or submit an online application, please email IDEAS@worldlearning.org to inquire about alternative submission options.

Applications submitted after the closing date and time will not be considered.

Grant Competition Timeline

October 15, 2024	Phase One opens
October 22, 2024	IDEAS Grant Competition Informational Webinar
November 7, 2024	Deep Dive: Aligning Your Proposal with U.S. Department of State Priorities
November 13, 2024	Ask A Grantee Webinar
December 12, 2024	Phase One closes
January 2025	Applications reviewed by study abroad professionals
Early February 2025	Semi-finalist selection announced; Phase Two begins
March 2025	Semi-finalist applicant webinar trainings (dates TBA)
April 17, 2025	Phase Two closes; Semi-finalists submit full proposals
April-May 2025	Applications reviewed by study abroad professionals
June 2025	Finalists announced



September 1, 2025 -February 28, 2027 Grant period of performance

We invite your questions concerning this RFP; please submit them to IDEAS@worldlearning.org with “IDEAS 2025 Grant Application – [Your Institution Name]” in the subject line. A list of frequently asked questions from previous grant competitions is available on the [program website](#). The IDEAS Program will host optional but recommended webinars to discuss the grant competition throughout October and November 2024. A recording of each webinar will be shared on the program website within one week of the webinar. Please see [Section 2a](#) for more information.

Issuance of this RFP, or the submission of an application, does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the IDEAS Program, nor does it commit the IDEAS Program to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. The IDEAS Program reserves the right not to fund any or all applications received.

SECTION 1: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1a. Background and Objectives

The IDEAS Program is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by World Learning. The IDEAS Program expands and bolsters American student mobility in support of U.S. foreign policy goals by providing institutional grants to U.S. colleges and universities and by offering virtual and/or in-person capacity building activities for grant recipients and the larger U.S. study abroad community. The expansion of study abroad at U.S. higher education institutions increases mutual understanding between American students and their international counterparts; develops American students’ international networks and knowledge, particularly as related to U.S. foreign policy priorities; and enhances American students’ readiness for careers that benefit both their local communities and the United States at large. The goals of the IDEAS Program are to:

- Create or expand U.S. colleges and universities’ capacity to administer study abroad programs that are primarily for U.S. undergraduate students and align with U.S. foreign policy goals;
- Increase the number of U.S. undergraduate students studying or interning abroad for academic credit, with an emphasis on expanding both the students and institutions taking part in study abroad and the destinations to which they travel; and
- Collect, develop, and share best practices for creating and/or expanding study abroad opportunities for U.S. students with the broader U.S. higher education community through trainings and other capacity building initiatives.

1b. Potential Project Models

The IDEAS Program invites applicants to propose creative and innovative project concepts to create and/or expand study abroad programming at their institution. Examples of the types of projects that applicants may propose include, but are not limited to:

- Create a faculty-led study abroad program;
- Create internship/experiential learning program(s);
- Develop study abroad resources or materials;
- Form or further develop partnerships with universities in a wide variety of international locations, [particularly destinations that are underrepresented in study abroad](#);
- Support the development of a new study abroad position or office at the college or university;



- Embed global, international, or intercultural exchange elements into courses in order to internationalize curricula;
- Develop hybrid and/or virtual exchange models and programs. If proposing virtual programming, applicants must specify how it will complement in-person exchange programs and campus internationalization goals.
- Work with a new or established consortium* of colleges and/or universities to address areas of mutual need, including but not limited to the project types above.
 - *Consortia proposing programming specifically focused on preparing the workforce of the future, please see [Section 2c](#).

Proposals may include a focus on the needs of a specific student group that is underrepresented in study abroad on an applicant’s campus. Please note though that all activities, programs, and resources developed and/or implemented with IDEAS Program funding must be accessible to students, faculty, and administrators regardless of race, color, or national origin, in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1962.

For further examples of project ideas, please review the [Grantee Project Descriptions](#) on our website.

All institutions applying for an IDEAS grant must substantively address at least one of the following U.S. foreign policy goals through their program activities. Competitive proposals will consider these goals in the context of travel and activities abroad as well as potential impact on U.S. communities and students’ career readiness. Examples of potential program themes are provided, but applicant institutions will want to demonstrate creativity in selecting topics that are authentic to their institutional mission and goals. Further examples of project ideas categorized by foreign policy goals can be found in [Appendix C: Foreign Policy Goals in Action](#).

- Civil Society, Journalism, and Education
 - Example programming could focus on the role civil society, journalism, and/or education play in shaping public knowledge and governance.
- Climate, Energy, and the Environment
 - Example programming could focus on agriculture and rural development, climate, conserving nature, food security, natural resource management, ocean and polar affairs, and renewable energy.
- Democracy and Human Rights
 - Example programming could focus on governance, human trafficking, immigration, refugees, and women’s empowerment.
- Economic Development and Entrepreneurship
 - Example programming could focus on business, closing skills gaps in local communities, human resources, infrastructure, resource development, and trade.
- Global Health
 - Example programming could focus on combatting drugs, contagious and infectious diseases, COVID-19 recovery, nursing, and public health policy and management.
- Technology and Innovation
 - Example programming could focus on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, critical and emerging technologies, digital engagement and policies, engineering, and technology cooperation.

NOTE: In both phases of the grant proposal, applicants will be asked to indicate which U.S. foreign policy goal(s) their proposed projects plan to address and how they will seek to address it. Applicants may address more than one foreign policy goal but should identify a primary foreign policy goal of focus.

TIP: Proposals that request funding to support domestic capacity building such as the development of resources, faculty and staff professional development, or creation of an institution’s first study abroad program may fit best under the *Economic*



Development and Entrepreneurship foreign policy goal. The proposal may then detail how the international experience related to the proposed program activities will help students to develop global career skills that they can use to support their future careers or economic development in their local community.

1c. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for consideration, proposals must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. The grant competition is open to accredited U.S. colleges and universities physically based in the United States or its territories with a broad range of capacity to administer study abroad programs. This includes institutions that currently have limited or no experience administering study abroad programs as well as those with established programs;
2. Proposals must support primarily U.S. undergraduate student mobility abroad, although graduate student participation in programs is allowed. Proposals do not need to support the creation or expansion of a specific study abroad program. The IDEAS Program welcomes innovative ideas for how to build (or rebuild) study abroad capacity on campus or nationally, for example, through the creation of study abroad resources addressing outreach needs on an applicant's campus or the development of virtual activities to complement in-person exchanges;
3. Funding may not be used to support direct outbound or inbound student costs, including but not limited to scholarships, travel, passports, tuition, or meals for U.S. or foreign students. Funds may be used to support U.S. faculty and/or staff travel overseas as well as travel for foreign faculty and/or staff to come to the United States to support program development. Group travel or program costs such as ground transportation, room rental, or cultural visit or tour fees that include both faculty and student participants are allowable. These group costs should be limited to no more than 5% of the total budget. All grant-funded travel must comply with the [Fly America Act](#);
4. While an institution as a whole may submit more than one proposal, individual units within an institution (i.e., schools, colleges, offices) may submit only one application each. If an institution is organized into a single school or college, it may only submit one proposal. Individual campuses within wider university systems will be considered separate institutions.
 - a. Example 1: The School of Business of X University and the School of Nursing at the same X University may each submit separate proposals.
 - b. Example 2: Within the School of Business of X University, the Marketing Department and Finance Department may only submit one proposal total.
 - c. Example 3: The School of Business of X University - City A and the School of Business of X University - City B may each submit separate proposals.
5. IDEAS grants can support the development of *in-person* U.S. study abroad programming in foreign locations with a [U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory](#) Level 1, 2, or 3. Development of in-person programming in foreign locations with a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 4 is not permitted.
 - a. In the event that a proposal is selected for an IDEAS grant and the destination changes to a Level 4, the recipient may be required to change their program location or other planned program activities to align with U.S. Department of State travel policies.
 - b. The IDEAS Program reserves the right to request program changes for specific countries or areas if deemed necessary during any stage of the application, selection process, or program period. Final awards are contingent upon the availability of funds and the security situation in-country. Furthermore, grant-funded overseas travel and in-person activities abroad may be suspended in consultation with the U.S. Embassy in-country during the course of the program.
 - c. Note: If selected for an IDEAS grant, institutions using funds to support travel to foreign locations will be required to share travel and safety information with the IDEAS Program, and those traveling to Level 3



locations will need to provide additional safety details. More information will be provided on this following award issuance.

6. IDEAS grants can support the development of *virtual* U.S. study abroad programming in all foreign locations, regardless of their U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory level.

SECTION 2: PHASE ONE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

2a. Application Guidelines

Applicants should read this RFP in its entirety and ensure their Phase One application addresses all items cited in this section and meets the eligibility criteria. All applications must be submitted by December 12, 2024, at 11:59p.m. Eastern Standard Time via the [IDEAS Grant Competition Application Portal](#). **Applications submitted after this deadline will not be considered.** Should your institution be unable to access and/or submit an online application, please email IDEAS@worldlearning.org to inquire about alternative submission options. Applicants are encouraged to review [Appendix A: Application Portal Instructions](#) before submitting their application.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to review the [FAQ document](#) online and join informational webinars hosted by the IDEAS Program as outlined below. The purpose of these webinars is to provide an overview of the IDEAS grant competition and answer questions from interested applicants. Recordings of the webinars and related materials will be posted on the IDEAS Program [website](#).

Webinar Information

1. Grant Competition Information Session
Date: October 22, 2024
Time: 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time
Register here: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_6h-Pj0GTQV2AVJpWioT5hw
2. Aligning Your Proposal with U.S. Department of State Priorities
Date: November 7, 2024
Time: 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time
Register here: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_8wmnUZ2HRe-osjYFgLv5uQ
3. Ask a Grantee Webinar
Date: November 13, 2024
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time
Register here: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_NGHKiUTuTBGC-g40BWF-Bg

2b. Phase One Application and Selection Process

A complete Phase One application should not exceed 750 words and should include all information described below. All information will be entered directly into the [IDEAS Grant Competition Application Portal](#). No documentation will be uploaded, and no additional information should be submitted as it will not be considered by the scoring panel. A full template of the Phase One application is included in [Appendix B: Phase One Application Template](#) for reference to assist applicants in developing their Phase One application.

Applicants should note that the selection criteria presented serve: (1) to identify the relevant topics which applicants should address in their applications; and (2) as the standard against which all applications will be evaluated. The application will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria set forth below.



Applications will undergo a preliminary review by the IDEAS Program for eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to the RFP. Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria, are incomplete, are unresponsive to the RFP, and/or are submitted after the due date will be deemed technically ineligible and will NOT be considered.

All Phase One applications deemed eligible and complete will be reviewed and evaluated by members of the scoring panel against the criteria described below. The scoring panel will be comprised of study abroad professionals and faculty from higher education institutions and organizations across the United States. The IDEAS Program will use the comments and scores of the scoring panel to select approximately 70 semi-finalists to move to Phase Two. In addition to the evaluation criteria described herein, the IDEAS Program reserves the right to consider factors such as the range of institution types, overseas destinations, and proposed program types represented, among other factors when selecting the pool of semi-finalists.

1. Institutional Description/ Statement of Need (150 words; 10 points):
 - a. Proposal describes a project that addresses a clear need specific to the applicant institution's campus and speaks to why this issue is pertinent. The project is clearly tied to the institution's unique characteristics, needs, and goals.
 - b. Proposal demonstrates a commitment to expanding study abroad in one or more of the following areas:
 - i. Expanding study abroad at institutions traditionally underrepresented in study abroad, including but not limited to community colleges, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), rural institutions and institutions in [states with lower rates of study abroad participation](#);
 - ii. Expanding study abroad safely to new overseas destinations, especially those that are [less common destinations](#);
 - iii. Expanding study abroad to be more accessible for all students, including student groups that are currently underrepresented in study abroad on the applicant's campus.
2. Proposed IDEAS Project (300 words; 20 points):
 - a. Proposal describes an idea that has potential to sustainably increase and/or expand the population of U.S. students who study abroad and/or the destinations where they study.
 - b. Proposal outlines how, as a direct result of the award, the college or university will in the near term increase the number of primarily undergraduate students (though not necessarily exclusively undergraduates) who study and/or intern abroad for academic credit and/or the destinations where they study.
 - c. Proposal depicts a project idea that is feasible within the time and cost restraints of the grant and is sustainable following the end of the grant period.
 - d. Proposal clearly explains the project's goals.
3. Foreign Policy Alignment (150 words; 10 points): All institutions applying for an IDEAS grant must substantively address one or more U.S. foreign policy goals through their program activities.
 - a. Proposal identifies a primary foreign policy goal. Applicants may also identify additional foreign policy goal(s) that their project addresses.
 - b. Proposal clearly describes how the proposed activities directly address the identified U.S. foreign policy goal(s).
4. Budget Estimate (total amount of funding requested + 150-word summary; 10 points): Total budget estimate should not exceed \$35,000 unless applying for an IDEAS consortium grant. Consortium grants should not exceed \$50,000. You may wish to confirm estimated budgeted amounts with your sponsored programs, grants, or other institutional offices responsible for external funding. In particular, you should confirm your institution's indirect cost rate, as well as the fringe rate applied to personnel expenses. Please note that semi-finalists will be asked to submit a full project budget during Phase Two of the application and confirm that the budget presented meets all



institutional policies. At this time, you will be able to adjust your budget estimate submitted in Phase One and justify any significant changes as part of the full budget narrative. If an institution is then selected for an IDEAS grant and requests budgetary adjustments exceeding more than 10 percent of total grants costs as presented in its Phase Two proposal, the IDEAS Program has the right to deny this request and, if the proposed project is no longer viable, award funding instead to an alternate institution.

Budget categories to consider in your estimate include both administrative and program costs. Administrative costs may include salaries and wages, fringe benefits, and indirect costs. If faculty overload compensation is proposed, please ensure compliance with Uniform Guidance Requirements at [2 CFR §200.430\(h\)](#). Program costs may include consultants, travel and transportation, supplies, equipment, and other direct costs. More information on these budget categories can be found in the [FAQ document](#).

- a. Budget summary clearly outlines the use of IDEAS funds.
- b. All costs are allowable, reasonable, and cost-effective.

2c. IDEAS Consortium Grant, *Preparing the Workforce of the Future*

The IDEAS Program will award approximately one grant of up to \$50,000 under the 2025 IDEAS grant competition to a consortium of at least two U.S. colleges and/or universities to collaborate on building study abroad capacity, programs, and resources at U.S. colleges and universities that will focus on preparing the workforce of the future.

Through this consortium grant, the IDEAS Program aims to:

- a) encourage collaboration and resource-sharing within U.S. higher education on how to use international education to more effectively prepare a future workforce that is equipped with global skills needed to meet local industry needs and drive U.S. economic prosperity;
- b) increase study abroad capacity and programs linked to local workforce development goals;
- c) provide expanded opportunities for U.S. students to participate in global workforce development opportunities, preparing them to participate in good-paying skilled jobs.

Applicants will need to identify an emerging or established but growing industry in their community that is currently facing a gap in skilled workers and outline how their proposal IDEAS grant project will help students obtain the international skills needed for their local workforce. This industry could be in any field, ranging from agriculture to cybersecurity to public health, but applicants will need to detail the industry-specific skills in demand in their community and how the proposed international programming will help develop them. Applicants will also be required to outline how they will share the lessons learned on developing study abroad programs and resources aligned with industry needs with the wider study abroad community. Consortium applications will need to engage at least two higher education institutions collaborating to address workforce needs in their communities.

Applications may represent an official or unofficial consortium, but all institutions receiving grants funds must be accredited U.S. colleges or universities. Applying consortia should identify a primary applicant that will submit the application, and if selected, serve as the prime awardee that will then issue subawards to the other consortium members for their portion of the program budget and activities. Applicants are required to specify at least one institution with which they will partner in Phase One. If selected as a semi-finalist, the applicant will need to name at least one individual staff person at the partner institution(s) in the Project Management Plan and Resumes as part of their Phase Two application.

As with all IDEAS grant applications, consortium grant applicants may propose a variety of project activities as outlined in Section 1b that aim at building study abroad capacity on their specific campuses. Regardless of the programming proposed, all consortium grant applicants must allocate at least \$5,000 of their budgets to developing and sharing resources with the



wider U.S. higher education community. This could include, but is not limited to, creating and sharing study abroad program models and resources; developing one-pagers, videos, or infographics on topics such as aligning curricula with industry needs that could be used across different institutions; delivering virtual trainings based on best practices; creating a public webpage with resources; and other creative ideas. The resources developed and shared under this portion of the grant funding should be useable and accessible to other institutions outside of the consortium. Consortium grant applicants may choose to dedicate more than \$5,000 to resource development and sharing, for example if they are proposing activities focused on more general research and resource development, but this is not required. Consortium grant applicants should briefly address how they will share resources with the U.S. higher education community more broadly in their project description and budget in Phase One, and selected semi-finalists will be asked for more details in Phase Two.

Applicants who meet these criteria and others as outlined in this document may apply for a grant of up to \$50,000 to support increased capacity for study abroad focused on preparing the workforce of the future.

In the Phase One and Phase Two selection processes, applicants for this consortium grant will be reviewed separately from the rest of the applicant pool, on their own panel. Evaluation criteria will remain the same in Phase One. In Phase Two, applicants not selected for the \$50,000 consortium grant may be selected for an IDEAS grant of \$35,000, contingent upon the submission and approval of a revised budget.

2d. Proposal Phase Application

Approximately 70 semi-finalists will be selected to advance to Phase Two of the grant competition. In Phase Two, applicants will provide a full proposal including a calendar of activities, monitoring and evaluation plan, budget documents, and other components. Details on the requirements of this phase will be shared with selected semi-finalists upon announcement of their application status in February 2025. Phase Two application components will resemble those described in the [2024 Phase Two Proposal Guidelines](#). Note that updates will be made to these requirements for the 2025 IDEAS grant competition. Applicant institutions selected as semi-finalists will be announced in February 2025.

The IDEAS Program anticipates awarding approximately 35 grants for a maximum funding level of up to \$35,000 each plus approximately one grant of up to \$50,000 to a consortium of at least two U.S. colleges and/or universities to collaborate on building study abroad capacity, programs, and resources focused on preparing the workforce of the future. The grant period of performance will be for up to 18 months, starting on or about September 1, 2025, and ending on or about February 28, 2027. Applicants and grantees are not required to utilize the full 18-month grant period. World Learning will issue and oversee the grants awarded under this RFP. Grants awarded under the IDEAS Program will be subject to, and administered in accordance with, the [U.S. Department of State's Standard Terms and Conditions](#).