

Request for Innovation Fund Proposals

Supported by ExxonMobil

Issuance Date: June 28, 2018
Question/Answer Period: June 28-September 28, 2018. Submit at 100kstrongamericas.org/questions
Closing Date/Time: October 1, 2018 / 12:00pm U.S. Eastern Standard Time

Subject: Request for Proposals for the 2018 ExxonMobil Competition for Study Abroad Innovations in Engineering, Physics, Geology, and Geophysics

Dear Applicants,

Partners of the Americas (Partners), the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and NAFSA: Association of International Educators are pleased to announce a new grant competition as part of *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Innovation Fund.

The 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund is the dynamic public-private sector partnership between the U.S. Department of State, Embassies, Partners of the Americas, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, corporations, and foundations working together to stimulate connectivity and collaboration between higher education networks throughout the Americas. The Innovation Fund inspires U.S. universities and colleges to team up with universities and higher education institutions in the rest of the Western Hemisphere to create new partnerships to increase student exchange and training programs and opportunities.

2018 ExxonMobil Competition for Study Abroad Innovations in Engineering, Physics, Geology, and Geophysics is supported through a generous contribution from ExxonMobil Corporation. This Innovation Fund competition is open to all higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States and **Argentina, Brazil, Guyana, and Mexico** that promote study abroad and training opportunities in the fields of Engineering (with a focus on petroleum, civil, chemical and mechanical engineering), Physics, Geology, and Geophysics.

The intent of this competition is to award approximately eleven (11) Innovation Grants of up to \$25,000 to selected proposals. Partners, DOS, and NAFSA reserve the right to fund any or none of the Innovation Fund grant applications submitted. Please refer to the following sections for a complete statement of goals and expected results.

Worldwide, ExxonMobil's strong social commitment includes contributions to non-profit organizations. The company also invests in social projects through collaboration with other organizations. In 2015, ExxonMobil Corporation, its divisions and affiliates, and the [ExxonMobil Foundation](#) provided a combined \$227 million in cash, goods, and services worldwide. Of that total, \$107 million supported U.S. communities and \$120 million supported communities in other countries around the world.

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Section I: Funding Opportunity Description

A. Background of the Innovation Fund

Many Latin American and Caribbean students do not have the English language skills or resources to succeed at U.S. institutions. Conversely, many U.S. students are unaware of the opportunities available in the hemisphere, and U.S. colleges and universities face challenges integrating study abroad into degree programs, designing programs for nontraditional students, and developing cost-effective opportunities for all students. There are approximately 49,000 U.S. students studying in Latin America and the Caribbean and 86,000 Latin American and Caribbean students studying in the U.S. each year. Canada contributes an additional 27,000 students studying in the U.S. while 1,400 U.S. students are studying in Canada. We are seeking to nearly double the number of students studying abroad in our region in less than ten years.

In 2011, *100,000 Strong in the Americas* was launched with the goal of increasing the annual number of students to and from the United States and Latin America and the Caribbean to 100,000 in each direction by 2020. To reach our goal, it is imperative that colleges and universities make study abroad accessible for all students, regardless of their major, socio-economic status, or the type of institution in which they are enrolled.

The central mechanism for supporting the goal of achieving 100,000 students studying abroad annually in each direction by 2020 is the ***100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund***, the dynamic public-private sector partnership between the U.S. Department of State, Embassies, Partners of the Americas, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, corporations, and foundations working together to stimulate connectivity and collaboration between higher education networks throughout the Americas. Since January 2014, the Innovation Fund has awarded 168 grants to teams of 325 higher education institutions from 25 countries in the Western Hemisphere region, and a total of 41 U.S. states benefit from Innovation Fund grant partnerships. Innovation Fund grants build institutional capacity, increase student mobility, strengthen regional education cooperation, and contribute to workforce development in the Americas.

B. Background of Competition Donor

Worldwide, ExxonMobil's strong social commitment includes contributions to non-profit organizations. The company also invests in social projects through collaboration with other organizations. In 2015, ExxonMobil Corporation, its divisions and affiliates, and the [ExxonMobil Foundation](#) provided a combined \$227 million in cash, goods, and services worldwide. Of that total, \$107 million supported U.S. communities and \$120 million supported communities in other countries around the world.

C. Purpose of Grant Competition

The purpose of the 2018 ExxonMobil Competition for Study Abroad Innovations in Engineering, Physics, Geology, and Geophysics is to provide incentive grants to higher education institutions

(HEIs) in United States, Argentina, Brazil, Guyana, and Mexico—these include colleges, community colleges, universities and other post-secondary institutions with credit-bearing programs—that promote study abroad and training opportunities in the fields of Engineering (with a focus on petroleum, civil, chemical and mechanical engineering), Physics, Geology, and Geophysics.

Proposals can focus on increasing outbound opportunities for students; on expanding the capacity for the partner institutions to host them or to reciprocate the exchange by sending students; on expanding their own capacity to host international students; or offer models that integrate increased flow in both directions. For example, applicants may propose to provide small scholarships to students in order to have an impact on their study abroad decisions as well as their ability to “find a way” to follow through on their study abroad plans. Another example of an innovative idea is to incorporate variations on traditional study abroad models toward *100,000 Strong in the Americas* goals, such as student and faculty engagement through service learning.

We envision that innovations are likely to include proposed activities that address many of the topics discussed at *100,000 Strong in the Americas* capacity-building workshops and [NAFSA Latin America Fora](#), including accreditation and credit transfer; community engagement; entrepreneurship; diversity and inclusion; language training; public-private sector collaboration; safety and security; student recruitment; technical skills development/training; and technology development, among others.

The Review Committee understands that a small institutional grant does not, in itself, create a sustainable long-term program. However, applicants should convincingly convey how this initial grant will set in motion additional plans and resources that will extend beyond the grant period and support the attainment of the goals of *100,000 Strong in the Americas*.

D. Expected Results

Higher education institutions that are successful in implementing Innovation Fund grants will demonstrate increased capacity to develop and administer study abroad programs that receive and/or send students between the United States and Argentina, Brazil, Guyana, and Mexico.

These HEIs will:

- Increase the number of students studying abroad in the Western Hemisphere;
- Demonstrate increased awareness of the barriers to study abroad at their institution;
- Possess a new model to engage students in the U.S., Argentina, Brazil, Guyana, and Mexico; and
- Demonstrate an increase in the number of effective partnerships with partnerships in the U.S., Argentina, Brazil, Guyana, and Mexico HEIs above and beyond what would have taken place without the grant.

Section II: Award Information

A. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Envisioned

The intent of the 2018 ExxonMobil Competition for Study Abroad Innovations in Engineering, Physics, Geology, and Geophysics is to award approximately eleven (11) Innovation Fund grants of up to \$25,000 to selected proposals. Partners of the Americas, the U.S. Department of State, and NAFSA reserve the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted, and may or may not select *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Innovators.

B. Notification of Award Recipients

Winning institutions will be notified no later than December 31, 2018. The list of grant recipients will be published on www.100kstrongamericas.org.

C. Period of Performance

Following the announcement of Innovation Fund winners, Partners will inform grant recipients with next steps to formalizing and receiving the award. The period of performance will be from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020, with the possibility of an extension following an analysis of the program at the time of the request.

D. Award Responsibilities

1. Grant Recipients

Grant recipients will be responsible for keeping the Innovation Fund's staff updated on the achievement of proposed program activities and interventions through reports on:

- Progress on program objectives and innovations, including student travel;
- Successes, challenges, and lessons learned in program implementation and evaluation;
- Student/faculty testimonials; and
- Program expenditures and cost-sharing.

2. Innovation Fund Staff

The Innovation Fund staff, based in Washington, D.C., will be involved in the following areas:

- Review of the recipient's progress reports;
- Approval of budget changes and additional expenditures;
- Approval of changes in program personnel;
- Approval of program extensions; and
- Request for additional information on proposed program and student/faculty engagement.

Section III: Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Higher education institutions located and legally registered in the U.S., Argentina, Brazil, Guyana, or Mexico are eligible to apply for the 2018 ExxonMobil Competition for Study Abroad Innovations in Engineering, Physics, Geology, and Geophysics. This competition seeks to receive applications from a diversity of HEIs, including public and private; four-year and shorter-term degree-issuing institutions; and large, small, rural, and urban institutions. The intention of selecting from these categories is to ensure representation of the broadest diversity of institutional profiles, so that successful innovations have the greatest possibility of replication across the institutions that will ultimately be critical to reaching the overall goal of *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Innovation Fund.

As autonomous, foreign institutions dedicated to the promotion of mutual understanding between the host country and the United States, bi-national centers (BNCs) are eligible to compete; however, if a BNC is applying as prime, it must do so in partnership with at least one in-country HEI, in addition to a U.S. HEI. Also, if a BNC is competing as prime and is unable to issue credit themselves, they must ensure that students who participate in the proposed study abroad program will receive some level of academic credit from an identified in-country or U.S. HEI partner in the proposal. Proposals should focus on creating sustainable study abroad programs within the partnering institutions. Those whose primary focus is support for BNC language training programs as preparation for study abroad are not eligible.

Proposals may involve new institutional partnerships or build on existing partnerships, but in all cases should demonstrate strong institutional support from the partnering institutions involved. Short-term and long-term programs are eligible, as long as students receive some level of credit from their home institution. Proposals that convincingly address inclusion and diversity in study abroad to provide study abroad access to underserved/underrepresented populations will be viewed favorably.

Overall, proposals must include a partnership between at least one higher education institution in the United States and one higher education institution in Argentina, Brazil, Guyana, and/or Mexico

In order to increase the diversity of participating institutions, the Review Committee reserves the right to give preference to institutions that have not previously received Innovation Fund grants, but all are encouraged to apply.

Section IV: Application and Submission

A. Proposal Application Format

Applications must not exceed a total of 25 pages and must utilize 12-pt Times New Roman font, single-spaced, typed in standard 8 ½" x 11" paper with one-inch margins, and each page numbered consecutively. Keep in mind the page limitations for each section of the proposal application as listed below. Any additional pages that exceed the page limitations will not be reviewed by the Review Committee.

- Cover Page (1 page)
- Table of Contents (1 page)
- Technical Narrative (10 pages max)
- Budget (3 pages max)
- Annexes (10 pages max)

A detailed description of the application format and requirements can be found at www.100kstrongamericas.org/app-format/

B. Online Submission Process

Applications must be submitted online through the Application Form found on the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* website (www.100kstrongamericas.org/grants) by the deadline indicated on the cover page of this solicitation.

Any prospective applicant desiring an explanation of this competition must request it by completing the online Inquiry Form (www.100kstrongamericas.org/questions). Before submitting questions, it is recommended that interested applicants review the questions and answers submitted in past competitions at www.100kstrongamericas.org/100k-competition-faqs. Oral explanations or instructions given before an award is disbursed will not be binding.

Applicants must comply with the instructions for submission included herein. All applications received by the closing date will be reviewed for responsiveness and programmatic merit in accordance with the specifications outlined in these guidelines and the application format. Applications that are received late or are incomplete will not be considered in the review process. No applications will be accepted via email unless otherwise instructed by Partners of the Americas. **Applications may only be submitted in English.**

Section V: Anticipated Timeline

ACTIVITY	TIME PERIOD
Launch of Grant Competition	June 28, 2018
Application Period	June 28 – October 1, 2018
Close of Grant Competition	October 1, 2018 / 12:00pm EST
Proposal Evaluation Process	October 1 – December 31, 2018
Notification of Status of Proposal	December 31, 2018
Award of Grant Funds to Winners	January 1 – March 31, 2019
Period of Performance for Grantees	April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020

Section VI: Agency Contacts

Questions concerning this solicitation must be sent via www.100kstrongamericas.org/questions prior to the deadline mentioned on the cover letter of this document. **No phone calls.**



100,000 Strong in the Americas is supported by the *U.S. Department of State* in partnership with *Partners of the Americas* and *NAFSA: Association of International Educators*.