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Request for Grant Proposals for **The U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships**

Issuance Date: October 29, 2020

Question/Answer Period: October 29, 2020 – March 1, 2021

Submit questions at 100kstrongamericas.org/questions

Closing Date: March 15, 2021

Dear Higher Education Institution Applicants,

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) at the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and Partners of the Americas (Partners) are pleased to announce the **U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships** to support higher education partnerships between Colombia and the United States to create new academic training and exchange programs for students in both countries. This Innovation Fund grant competition is supported through generous contributions from the **Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior, Mariano Ospina Pérez (ICETEX)** and the **U.S. Department of State through the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá**.

Since its inception in 2014, the **Innovation Fund** has become the trusted mechanism that supports the Department of State's signature hemispheric-wide education initiative – *100,000 Strong in the Americas* – to build partnerships between higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States and the rest of the Western Hemisphere, increase regional student mobility, and provide new models of academic exchange and training programs for students. The Innovation Fund provides unique opportunities to U.S. universities and colleges to partner with higher education institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean to create partnerships, build capacity, provide students with access to training programs, and strengthen regional education cooperation throughout the Americas.

As of August 2020, the Innovation Fund has awarded 232 grants to 477 teams of higher education institutions in 25 countries and 49 U.S. states. Higher education institutions in Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Chile are currently the top six countries in this regional education initiative to engage with the Innovation Fund in partnerships with U.S. universities and colleges. Partnerships resulting from Innovation Fund grants provide students with critical access to new academic exchange and training opportunities so that they can work in teams, solve real-world problems, and gain technical, linguistic, cross-cultural skills – critical for workforce development. To date, over 2,300 higher education institutions have joined the Innovation Network, including 1,400 universities and colleges in the United States.

The U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships is designed to support dynamic partnerships between Colombian and United States higher education



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institutions to work in teams to provide new models of academic training programs for students in multiple academic areas. For a complete list of eligible academic areas and other requirements, please see Section III: Description of Innovation Fund Grant Opportunity.

The intent of the U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships is to award up to **ten (10) Innovation Fund Grants of up to \$26,175** each to selected proposals.

NOTE: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) at the U.S. Department of State and Partners of the Americas, in coordination with ICETEX, reserve the right to fund any or none of the Innovation Fund grant proposals submitted for consideration. Please refer to the following for a complete statement of goals and expected results.



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Section I: Innovation Fund Partners

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) at the U.S. Department of State (DOS) supports and manages the **100,000 Strong in the Americas (100K) Innovation Fund**, in collaboration with Partners of the Americas and U.S. embassies throughout the Western Hemisphere. Since 2013, the DOS investment in this hemispheric-wide education initiative has ensured successful public-private sector cooperation between WHA/DOS, companies, foundations, regional government entities, and academic networks throughout the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The Innovation Fund cultivates a regional network of engaged and innovative partners and institutions that strengthens collaboration and transparency among governments, business, and academia – critical to economies in the Americas.

The **Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior, Mariano Ospina Pérez (ICETEX)** is a Colombian public entity that promotes higher education through the granting of educational loans and its collection (with its own resources or from third parties) to populations with few economic opportunities and good academic performance. Within the framework of its Educational Cooperation Policy (Agreement 001/2019), ICETEX promotes the development of internationalization of higher education to improve quality, relevance, equity, research, and innovation through the expansion of mechanisms linked to government entities, higher education institutions abroad or in Colombia. This is how ICETEX implements three development axes in which Colombian citizens, teachers, researchers, national and international experts can strengthen their academic and professional training and receive support through axes such as: a) ICETEX International, in which ICETEX, as a pioneering entity in higher education internationalization, participates in international spaces as a tool for creating new opportunities for Colombians, foreigners, and higher education institutions; b) partnerships for internationalization, in which ICETEX manages cooperation initiatives to strengthen the internationalization of higher education in Colombia; c) regional cooperation, in which ICETEX manages and strengthens international cooperation programs among the regions in order to generate greater opportunities for access and equity to higher education institutions in the Colombian regions.

During the last two years, the international management at ICETEX has focused on increasing cooperation and internationalization on campus based on the criteria of reciprocity, inclusion, and quality in academic programs. In addition to increasing the number of Colombian beneficiaries abroad and foreigners in Colombia, the Office of International Relations (ORI) has promoted different mechanisms so that through co-financed programs, capacity building projects, training and international positioning are generated.

Likewise, ICETEX (together with the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation), has been a fundamental actor in the creation, development, and management of the Scientific Colombia Program. This program aims to strengthen the quality of Colombian higher education institutions in research, teaching, and internationalization in order to close the gap in Colombia through the development of science, technology, and innovation. To date, more than 300 national and international HEIs, in addition to a large participation of actors from the economic sector, have participated in its grant competitions. Currently, the ORI administers the Passport to Science



scholarship-credit program, which seeks to encourage more Colombians to study in the best universities in the world and each day strengthens the Academic Counseling program by offering guidance in study abroad.

The ORI has been increasing cooperation with international organizations, such as the Fulbright Binational Commission, positioning Colombia as an academic destination. For example, it has increased Language Assistants from Fulbright ETA (English Teaching Assistant), as well as supported to co-finance U.S. scholars and U.S specialists in Colombian universities for the third consecutive year. For this reason, ICETEX and Fulbright Colombia received the 2017 Generation Study Abroad Award from the Institute of International Education (IIE).

To achieve this, the ORI designed the components of the international educational cooperation policy to align with the National Development Plan 2018-2022, "Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity", in which the main objective is to promote opportunities within the framework of equity, through education as a priority public policy of the Colombian National Government. Therefore, these components have been designed to determine the different international cooperation programs for the interest groups that will benefit from this policy.

Each strategic component contains a portfolio of programs, which define the modalities, strategies, requirements, and conditions that have been developed, in some cases, under national standards. The components are: a) Programs for Colombians; b) Programs for Foreigners in Colombia; c) Support Programs for Higher Education Institutions; and d) Special Cooperation Programs. For more information about ICETEX, visit <https://portal.icetex.gov.co/Portal>.

Section II: Eligibility Information

The Innovation Fund seeks the broadest diversity of institutions to compete for grants and to develop exchange program innovations that will have the greatest possibility of replication throughout the United States and rest of the Western Hemisphere. As such, the following types of higher education institutions (HEIs) are eligible to apply for the U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships.

- **United States:** HEIs located and legally registered in the U.S., including four-year degree-issuing institutions (public and private), community colleges, technical/vocational schools, and other post-secondary institutions with credit-bearing programs.
- **Colombia:** HEIs located and legally registered in Colombia¹, including accredited and non-accredited² institutions, universities, professional technical institutes, research centers, and other post-secondary institutions.

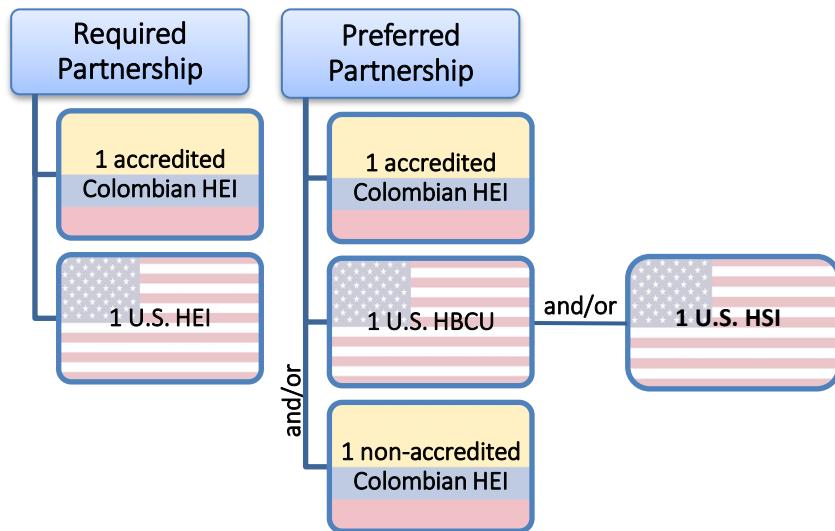
¹ Under Colombian Law 30 of 1992 and Article 19 of the "ley de marras", **higher education institutions (HEIs)** are: professional technical institutions, universities, and colleges.

² **Non-accredited HEIs** refers to institutions in Colombia that have not undergone the accreditation process or have not met the requirements established by [Colombia's National Accreditation System](#). The [National Accreditation Commission of Colombia](#) is the country's entity responsible for leading the evaluation process with regards to compliance with the established accreditation procedures.



Required: Proposals must include a team of at least one HEI in the U.S. and one accredited HEI in Colombia. Non-accredited Colombian HEIs are eligible to be a part of the partnership, but they cannot be the prime applicant of the grant proposal. Rather, they may only be a partnering institution, alongside a U.S. HEI and an accredited Colombian HEI, either of which would serve as the prime applicant of the grant.

Preferred: Proposals that include one or more Historically Black College & University (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the United States, and/or a non-accredited institution in Colombia will be found favorable during the evaluation process.



Proposals may involve new institutional partnerships or build on existing partnerships, but in all cases, should demonstrate strong institutional support and should focus on creating sustainable exchange programs among the partnering institutions.

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. However, all HEIs (including previous grant winners) are strongly encouraged to apply.

Section III: Description of this Innovation Fund Grant Competition

The goals of the U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships are to:

- Increase partnerships between HEIs in the U.S. and Colombia;
- Provide new opportunities for HEIs in the U.S. and Colombia to work in teams to design, create, and implement new models of short-term, student exchange and training programs in both countries during the 2021-2022 academic year; and



- Provide new opportunities for underserved students in the U.S. and Colombia to work in teams, increase technical, linguistic, and workforce development skills, and gain access to innovative academic training and exchange programs in both countries.

A. Thematic Requirements

Within the framework of the institutional transformation processes and in response to current needs, the Colombian government saw it necessary to create new programs in its international portfolio and expand existing ones to promote access to higher education. Likewise, strengthening its programs and strategies with an international component implies an opportunity in the expansion of international portfolios and the strengthening of the internationalization of HEIs and actors of the Colombian education system under the different modalities that this represents.

With this understanding and taking into account Colombia's 2018-2022 National Development Plan, "Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity," priority thematic areas were established for the Colombian Government to respond to the needs of building the country toward the path of equity, legality, entrepreneurship, and justice, which is aligned with regional goals and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Colombian Government's priority thematic areas are known as the 8 foci of the *misión de sabios* and are included in the eligible themes for this grant competition.

ELIGIBLE AREAS FOR PROPOSED PROGRAMS	
GENERAL THEMES	ACADEMIC AREAS OF STUDY
Convergent Technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nanotechnology• Information Technology• Cognitive Technology• Industry 4.0
Oceanography and Hydrobiological Resources	
Creative and Cultural Industries	
Sustainable Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Renewable Energy Engineering• Energy Economics• Solar/Wind/Hydro/Thermal Power Generation• Battery Storage• Energy Conservation• Geographic Information Systems• Industrial Research and Innovation• Sustainable Business• Public Policy• Renewable Energy Finance



Social Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human Development• Equity
Life and Health Sciences	
Basic and Space Science/Astronomy	
Biotechnology, Bioeconomics, and Environment	
Public Health	Emphasis on projects that address needs created by, or topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic or to future pandemics and public health emergencies.
Distance/Virtual Education	Advancement of student knowledge through distance/virtual education. If proposing distance/virtual education, programs <u>must</u> also include student mobility components between the U.S. and Colombia.
Sustainable Design, Architecture, and Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental Design and Architecture• Sustainable Civil Engineering• Environmental Engineering• Materials Sciences• Recycled Construction Materials• Structural Engineering• Earthquake Engineering• Wind Engineering• Architectural Engineering
Economic Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economics• Community Development• Entrepreneurship• Empowerment of Young People and/or Women
Sustainable Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agroecology• Agronomy• Agricultural Engineering• Food Science• Nutrition Sciences• Soil/Plant Sciences• Agricultural Economics• Ecosystem Science/Management• Food Security• Agricultural Protection



Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water Pollution Prevention• Water Access and Conservation• Water Resources Engineering• Water Treatment and Management• Environmental Science• Sanitary Engineering• Municipal/Urban Engineering• Waste Management and Recycling
Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)	

NOTE: The academic areas above is not a complete list of eligible areas; rather, they are recommendations and guidelines for the competition. As long as the proposed program falls under one or more of the general themes above and the field(s) of study can be sufficiently justified in the proposal, it will be considered eligible.

B. Proposal Requirements & Considerations

1. Project Timeframe (Grant Period)

All proposed activities, including planning and implementation, should take place during the time period of September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2022. Proposals may include information on activities that have occurred prior to this period that provide background to laying the groundwork for the proposed project. Proposals may also include activities beyond these dates, such as additional student exchanges, in order to demonstrate continuation of the program beyond the grant period.

2. Project Design & Components

Innovation Fund grant proposals should include the use of innovative practices and models that will increase academic exchange and training opportunities in selected academic areas for students in Colombia and the United States. This may include effective practices and strategies discussed at *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Innovation Fund workshops and webinars, as well as at regional higher education conferences (i.e., AEIA, CAIE, CCID, CONAHEC, FAUBAI, HACU, LACHEC, NAFSA, etc.), such as: credit transfer, community engagement, entrepreneurship, language training, local private sector support/engagement, program assessment, student recruitment, technical skills training, and use of technology/virtual platforms to enhance traditional academic exchange programs.

Proposed programs may include **both virtual and in-person** training programming between the partnering HEIs but must support the sending and hosting of students and faculty between the institutions during the grant period.



IMPORTANT: The U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships seeks proposals that will create new academic training and exchange programs that will benefit underserved students from diverse socio-economic, racial, and educational backgrounds in the U.S. and Colombia. For this reason, proposals that include one or more Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and/or Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in the U.S. will be viewed favorably during the evaluation process.

Applicants that seek to target or include underrepresented students at their institution and/or their partnering institution(s) **must provide a recruitment strategy/plan** for reaching these diverse groups.

3. Student Activities

Applicants should also include activities that enhance student academic learning through practical training, such as engagement through service-learning, field-based activities, or other methods to combine with class-based course work. Students must receive some level of credit from their home institution during, or as a result, of the proposed program.

4. Sustainability

Applicants should describe how the experience of implementing the proposed mobility program at the partnering HEIs will expand their capacity and develop their skills and competencies in internationalization in any of the following areas:

- Components of internationalization: internationalization at home, internationalization of research, internationalization of curricula, internationalization of extension, academic mobility, bilingualism and multilingualism, international academic cooperation, etc.
- Internationalization management
- Models, approaches, and structures of internationalization
- Teacher training: teaching methodologies, pedagogies, use of technological tools and ICT
- Capacity-building for the creation/development of virtual programs
- Access to technological resources and platforms for virtual education
- Development of intercultural and global competencies for education

These internationalization topics can also be integrated into any of the academic themes/areas of study selected for the proposed program, as listed above in Part A: “Thematic Requirements” of this section.

Applicants should also highlight how a grant from the Innovation Fund would impact the HEI teams’ ability to secure additional resources from alternative sources to sustain the proposed student exchange and training programs between Colombia and the United States beyond the Innovation Fund grant period.



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5. Other Considerations

It is encouraged, but not required, that HEI applicants commit to offsetting carbon emissions produced by flights involved in the proposed program, using a reputable provider of carbon offset³ services. MyClimate is one provider of carbon offsets which makes it very easy to determine the carbon cost of any given flight and offers a number of options to invest in carbon savings in communities in Latin America (https://co2.myclimate.org/en/flight_calculators/new). For example, according to MyClimate, a roundtrip flight between Bogotá and Washington, D.C. generates 1.3 tons of carbon per passenger, which would cost \$40 to offset.

For a complete guide on how to structure your proposal and what contents to include, visit 100kstrongamericas.org/app-format/.

C. Expected Results

Higher education institutions that are successful in implementing Innovation Fund grants will:

- Plan, promote, and implement new exchange/training opportunities for students in the U.S. and in Colombia;
- Increase numbers of students working in teams to gain skills in the U.S. and in Colombia;
- Create/strengthen HEI partnerships through bilateral academic exchange programs; and
- Engage/collaborate with Innovation Fund during and after the grant period to share lessons learned, effective practices, and new models of academic mobility and training programs.

Section IV: Award Information

A. Awards Available

The intent of the U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships is to award up to ten (10) Innovation Fund grants of up to \$26,175 to selected proposals, pending the evaluation and selection process. The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) at the U.S. Department of State, Partners of the Americas, and ICETEX reserve the right to fund any or none of the grant proposals submitted for consideration in this Innovation Fund competition.

B. Notification of Award Recipients

The winners of the U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships will be announced at the [NAFSA 2021 Annual Conference & Expo](#), which will take place on May 30 – June 4, 2021. Please note that this date is subject to change and in such cases, Partners of the Americas will inform applicants accordingly.

³ To learn more about carbon offsets, visit <https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/green-science/carbon-offset.htm>.

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C. Period of Performance

Following the award notification by Partners of the Americas, grant-winning teams will receive details and documents related to formalizing and receiving the award funds. The grant period will be from September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2022. Extensions may be granted pending analysis of the 100K program at the time of the request, and in coordination with Partners of the Americas.

D. Innovation Fund Award Responsibilities

1. Innovation Fund Staff at Partners of the Americas

Partners of the Americas, based in Washington, D.C., will work in close coordination with Award Recipients in the following areas:

- Technical support of grant activities and oversight of award terms/contract;
- Review of the recipient's progress reports;
- Approval of changes in grant budget, personnel, timeline, and activities;
- Request for additional information on grant activities and student/faculty engagement;
- Facilitation of communications between recipients and WHA/DOS, ICETEX, and where appropriate, U.S. Embassies; and
- Outreach regarding sharing of lessons learned from program implementation and participation at visibility events and conferences, among others

2. HEI Award Recipients

Award recipients will be responsible for sharing information on a regular basis with the Innovation Fund staff on program activities through report mechanisms provided by Partners of the Americas. Project reports will provide:

- Progress on program goals and objectives, including the development of grant activities and student and faculty travel;
- Successes, challenges, and lessons learned in program implementation and evaluation;
- Testimonials on how the grant benefits/impacts students and institutions; and
- Program expenditures and cost-sharing.

Section V: Format and Submission

A. Proposal Format

Proposals 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 and document types for each section of the proposal as listed below. Any additional pages that exceed the page limitations will not be reviewed by the Review Committee.



- **Narrative** in PDF (12 pages max)
 - Cover Page (1 page)
 - Table of Contents (1 page)
 - Technical Narrative (10 pages max)
- **Budget** (5 pages max)
 - Summary in Excel format
 - Narrative in Word/PDF format
- **Supporting Documents** in PDF (no page limit)
 - Letters of Support
 - CVs
 - Additional materials

Note that Applicants will be required to upload each of the three sections above separately in the Application Portal. **For a detailed description of the proposal format and requirements, including the evaluation criteria, visit 100kstrongamericas.org/app-format/.**

B. Online Submission Process

Proposals must be submitted online through the **Application Portal** found on the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* website (100kstrongamericas.org/application-portal/) by the deadline indicated on the cover page of this RFP. Proposals that are received late or are incomplete will not be considered in the review process. No proposals will be accepted via email unless otherwise instructed by Partners of the Americas. **Proposals must be submitted in English.**

Applicants seeking information or clarification about this competition should complete the online form at 100kstrongamericas.org/questions. For a comprehensive list of questions received from applicants of previous grant competitions, please visit 100kstrongamericas.org/100k-competition-faqs. *Please note that some answers in the FAQs page may not apply to the U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships due to the restrictions described in this RFP.*

Section VI: Anticipated Timeline

ACTIVITY	TIME PERIOD*
Launch of 100K Grant Competition	October 29, 2020
Close of 100K Grant Competition	March 15, 2021
Proposals Evaluation Process	March 16 – May 29, 2021
Notification of Status of Proposal	2021 NAFSA Annual Conference (May 30-June 4, 2021)

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Award of Grant Funds to Winners	August – September 2021
Period of Performance for 100K Grants	September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2022

***Dates are subject to change.**

Section VI: Acceptance of Terms & Conditions

By submission of a proposal for the U.S.-Colombia Grant Competition for 21st Century Higher Education Partnerships, applicants will accept the requirements, terms, and conditions of the grant competition and the provisions listed in this RFP, the proposal guidelines, and evaluation criteria. Once the proposal is submitted, it will not be possible to claim ignorance on the terms established in the RFP.

Applicants will declare that the information provided in the proposal is true and accurate. In case of any inconsistencies in the information or documentation provided, the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Innovation Fund, ICETEX, and the U.S. Department of State may, at any time, reject the application, without prejudice to corresponding legal actions.

Section VII: Innovation Fund Contact at Partners of the Americas

Questions about this RFP must be submitted by completing the online form at www.100kstrongamericas.org/questions. Questions should be received prior to the deadline stipulated on the cover page of this RFP. No phone calls please.



100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund is supported by the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. Department of State in partnership with Partners of the Americas.