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Solicitation Amendment / Modification

1.	Solicitation No.	05062026/AK
2.	Solicitation Name	Fulbright Scholar Program Website Development and Maintenance
3.	Issue Date	May 6, 2026
4.	Closing Date	June 5, 2026
5.	Solicitation Amendment No.	1
6.	Solicitation Amendment Date	May 22, 2026

7. The above numbered solicitation is amended as set forth in Item 9 below.

8. The hour and dates specified for receipt of proposals/quotations: is not extended; is extended as described in Item 9 below.

9. Description of Amendment/Modification:

The purpose of this solicitation amendment is to inform prospective offerors/bidders that the above numbered solicitation is hereby amended to provide response to questions. Please see the attached for questions and IIE's responses.

END OF AMENDMENT

Fulbright Scholar Program Website Development and Maintenance - Amendment 1 - Questions and Answers

Question

Is there an incumbent vendor currently managing the site? If so, what level of cooperation and documentation can we expect during the transition to a new provider?

Response

Yes. There is an incumbent.

The RFP mentions potential future projects such as homepage redesign and AI integration. Are these scoped within the base contract budget, or will they be funded separately through change orders?

Future projects such as a website redesign and AI integration will depend on a number of factors including programmatic needs the availability of funding from the sponsor and will likely be funding through amendments to the contract.

Can you clarify what the June 22–26 demonstrations will involve? Will vendors be expected to present a live demo, a prototype, or a presentation of their approach?

Offerors selected as semi-finalists will receive an agenda in advance. Generally speaking the semi-finalist meeting is a presentation of approach with time allowed for Q&A.

Will the incumbent be available for knowledge transfer—and for how long? Do you know if there will be any barriers to accessing the existing codebase, documentation, hosting credentials, etc.?

In the event of a transition, IIE will manage the transition including any involvement of the incumbent.

The RFP outlines a list of potential future projects, such as a homepage refresh, formal UX research, and AI integration. Should we scope these as separate projects outside the 15-hour monthly maintenance retainer?

Yes

Does IIE have an annual ceiling for combined maintenance and enhancement work across the five-year term? Or will enhancement budgets be authorized on a project-by-project basis?

IIE has not established a fixed annual ceiling for the combined value of maintenance and enhancement work over the five-year term. Enhancement and development efforts will be authorized and funded on a project-by-project basis, taking into account programmatic needs and the availability of sponsor funding. For ongoing maintenance services, IIE intends to select an offeror that provides the best overall value, considering both cost and demonstrated ability to deliver high-quality service.

Do you accept proposals from offshore countries such as Colombia?

Yes.

Could you confirm whether IIE will consider a sole-proprietor/independent specialist if the proposal includes a narrow support model and documented handover, or whether offerors must be full-service firms with three current managed external websites and three recommendation letters as mandatory pass/fail items?

Yes. IIE can consider proposals from sole proprietor/independent specialists. Proposals must include all required elements to be considered.

Can offerors reformat the table for improved readability provided all requested information is included and marked as it appears in the RFP?

Yes.

Can IIE please confirm if the implementation plan, methodology, quality control plan, exceptions, and process/timeline when collaborating with another solution provider are all part of the 5-page description of services offered in response to Attachment A, or are each of these sections separate, without page limits?

The page limit for the complete Implementation of the Statement of Work is five (5) pages.

Can IIE confirm that “additional information or supplemental material” can include appendices such as resumes and work samples?	Any additional information or supplemental material must be within the established page limits listed in the RFP.
Could IIE please confirm whether the documentation referenced in Attachment C should be submitted prior to contract signing, rather than included with our technical proposal submission?	The documentation referenced in Attachment C does not need to be included at the proposal submission stage. Any documentation can be submitted at the contract stage.
Is there a current incumbent vendor maintaining the site, and is the incumbent eligible to rebid? What transition window does IIE anticipate between contract award (June 29) and start of work (October 1)?	There is an incumbent and the incumbent is eligible to apply.
Will the outgoing vendor be contractually obligated to support knowledge transfer, or should the incoming vendor scope this independently?	In the event of a transition, IIE will manage the transition including any involved of the incumbent.
Is up-to-date technical documentation available for the current site, or should onboarding include a discovery/audit phase?	Available technical documentation will be shared with selected vendor.
For the future integration between the Liaison Directory and the Alumni Directory on fulbrightprogram.org, is fulbrightprogram.org maintained by IIE or by a separate vendor? Will Year 1 include integration work, or is it a Year 2+ deliverable?	Fulbrightprogram.org is maintained by a separate vendor. Timeline of projects will be determined based on funding and program priorities.
Section A.C lists potential future projects. Should offerors include indicative pricing for these in the cost proposal, or are they strictly out of base-year scope and to be priced separately under option years?	Offerors are not required to include indicative pricing for future development or design projects. However, offerors must provide sufficient detail regarding their pricing approach and methodology to enable IIE to assess the reasonableness of costs for future work. Offerors may, at their discretion, include indicative pricing examples to support this understanding.
The 5-page limit on the implementation description does this exclude diagrams, screenshots, and appendices, or is it a strict total page count?	The five page limit on the Implementation of the Statement of Work is a strict limit.
Is there a current incumbent vendor supporting the website, and if so, will there be a structured transition and knowledge-transfer period between vendors?	Yes. There is a current incumbent. IIE will manage the transition process, if needed.
Are you currently engaged with an agency for website maintenance? Is that agency participating in this RFP?	Yes. There is an incumbent. The incumbent is eligible to submit a proposal for this RFP.
Can we provide information for items such as “Past Performance” in our own document, or do you require we use the tables exactly “as is” from the RFP doc? We would include the same columns in our version, but reformat for legibility and spacing.	Yes. You may use your own format but all required information must be included.
What’s listed is understood for future project work, but doesn’t seem applicable to ongoing support at 15 hours/mo (net thirty (30) days after satisfactory completion of each deliverable or milestone). How will ongoing support hours be paid?	Generally speaking, IIE expects to pay for regular maintenance and ongoing support on a quarterly basis.
Section 3.5 references a possible transition from "IIE's current solution." Can IIE confirm whether there is an incumbent support vendor and whether they intend to bid?	There is an incumbent and the incumbent is eligible to apply.

Do case studies, screenshots, and appendices (resumes, SOC 2 docs, additional references) count against the stated page limits?

Yes. Please note that SOC 2 documents do not need to be submitted with the proposal. SOC 2 documents can be submitted during contracting.

What is driving IIE's decision to seek a new vendor at this time? Are there specific pain points with the current provider related to performance, responsiveness, or capabilities?

IIE is conducting this procurement as part of its standard practice to ensure periodic competition. The current contract was awarded approximately five years ago, and IIE policy generally requires recompetition at least every five years. This RFP is intended to provide IIE with the opportunity to evaluate the marketplace and select the provider that offers the best overall value and alignment with the current and evolving organizational needs.

What is the expected level of cooperation from the incumbent vendor during the transition period? Is there an existing contract end date or notice period?

In the event of a transition, IIE will manage the relationship with the incumbent.

If IIE exercises the option years, should offerors anticipate a similar annual scope and investment level, or does IIE expect the engagement to scale significantly?

Future development and enhancement projects will depend on a number of factors including programmatic needs and the availability of funding from the sponsor.

Could IIE elaborate on the anticipated scope and timing for future redesign or AI-related initiatives referenced in the RFP?

Future development and enhancement projects, including a potential redesign of the website and AI-related initiatives, will depend on a number of factors including programmatic needs and the availability of funding from the sponsor.

Could IIE clarify whether ongoing content migration or restructuring efforts are anticipated during the contract term?

If you mean additional content migration and restructuring after the initial transition, then no.

Question

Can you confirm the current Drupal version in use, and whether there are any known customizations or third-party integrations beyond OKTA that the selected vendor will be expected to maintain from day one?

The RFP references 15 hours per month of maintenance. Can you clarify whether these hours cover only reactive support, or if they also include proactive tasks such as plugin updates, backups and quarterly checks?

Is a staging or development environment already in place, or is the selected vendor expected to set one up from scratch at the start of the contract?

Could you confirm the current Drupal core version? Does IIE anticipate a major version upgrade to Drupal 11 within the contract period?

For offerors taking the SOC 2/NIST path, do you know the timeline IIE expects between contract award and completion of the TPRM process? Can work begin during that review?

Should we assume Internet Explorer is a legacy artifact and simply propose support for current Chromium-based Edge, Chrome, Firefox, and Safari only?

Can IIE provide the number of custom vs contributed modules currently active on the site?

The RFP mentions the requirement to “Design and conduct accessibility audits and testing... directly within the site admin”. Will IIE be requiring custom module development for this functionality or is IIE amenable to integration of existing custom modules or browser tools that closely align with organizational requirements?

Who is IIE’s current hosting provider for the Fulbright Scholar site?

Will IIE be providing a staging environment for parallel development and testing, or will that be the responsibility of the contractor?

To assess the current state and price accurately, would IIE be able to share the following three Drupal admin reports from the production site (or from a staging copy)? Field list report — /admin/reports/fields; Available updates report — /admin/reports/updates; Status report — /admin/reports/status

Approximately how many published pages, content types, and custom modules exist on the current site? An indicative count is sufficient.

Is the custom site search engine built on Drupal Search API + Solr/Elasticsearch, or a different stack? Is it self-hosted or a managed service?

What is the current hosting plan tier? Does IIE expect the vendor to manage hosting credentials and DNS, or will IIE retain control?

Are daily backups currently performed by the hosting provider, by the incumbent vendor, or both? Where are backup archives stored and retained?

What is the current scope of the Okta integration? Are there published API specs or Okta application configurations the vendor will inherit?

Response

We are in the process of upgrading to Drupal 11 and it will be completed by start of new agreement. Aside from Okta integration, there is also an API integration with another Fulbright website - <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/pdr>.

This covers primarily pro-active support and some reactive support. There will be some months where this will not be enough for reactive support, but there will be funding to cover that.

Yes, there is already one in place

We are in the process of upgrading to Drupal 11 and it will be completed by start of new agreement

Yes

Yes

This information will be shared with the selected vendor.

IIE is amenable to using existing custom modules.

Pantheon

Contractor

These will be shared with selected vendor

Approximately there 280,000 published pages, 20 cont

Current search engine is built through Solr

IIE will retain control of hosting agreement with Pantheon

Vendor and web host work together on backups

This information will be shared with the selected vendor.

Is the site currently on Universal Analytics (UA) or Google Analytics 4 (GA4)? Are there any other analytics tools in use?	Site currently uses GA4.
Across the 130+ countries with admin access, what is the expected concurrent editorial activity? Is there a documented content approval workflow?	Yes
Does IIE have a preferred AI vendor or stack in mind? Are there data-residency or USG-specific AI usage policies that the vendor must follow given the State Department sponsorship?	No, we currently don't have preferred AI vendors
Has a recent accessibility audit been performed against the current site? If yes, can the audit findings or VPAT be shared so remediation effort can be scoped?	No
The RFP requires both Section 508 compliance and WCAG 2.1 AA support. Should the vendor target WCAG 2.2 AA as a forward-looking baseline, or strictly 2.1 AA?	WCAG 2.2 AA works
Vardot can provide a SOC 2 Type 2 attestation and complete the NIST CSF assessment via OneTrust. Will the IT Security Questionnaire be issued only to the awarded vendor, or is it required as part of the proposal submission?	Awarded vendor
Is the Section 889 (Huawei/ZTE) prohibition a flow-down clause requiring a signed representation, or is a statement of compliance within the proposal sufficient?	A statement of compliance is sufficient with the proposal. The requirement will be a flowdown provision in the resulting contract.
The 3-hour weekday / 18-hour weekend response SLA references "weekdays" should this be interpreted as US Eastern Time business days, or rolling 24/5 coverage? Are critical/P1 incidents expected to be handled outside these windows?	US Eastern Time business days
Are there penalty/credit mechanisms tied to SLA breaches, or is the SLA a performance target only?	Offerors are encourage to propose service level frameworks that may incorporate financial penalties or service credits, where appropriate. Any proposed credit or penalty structures should be clearly defined, reasonable in scope, and aligned with industry standards and the overall risk profile of the services being offered.
What are the known areas of technical debt in the current Drupal environment?	There's currently no known areas
Could you clarify the anticipated ratio of ongoing maintenance/support work versus enhancement and modernization initiatives during a typical contract year?	This varies each year depending on program needs.
Are there preferred accessibility validation tools, audit methodologies, or reporting expectations currently used by IIE or the Department of State beyond WCAG 2.1 AA and Section 508 compliance requirements?	No
Regarding the future AI-related enhancements mentioned in the RFP, is IIE primarily envisioning user-facing discovery/navigation improvements, internal editorial efficiencies, or broader conversational AI capabilities?	We are open to AI-related enhancements that effectively improve the functionality of the website and user experience.
Are there any anticipated platform, hosting, identity management, analytics, or security roadmap changes over the next 3–5 years that the selected vendor should account for in long-term planning?	No, not currently.
Are there IIE, ECA, Department of State, privacy, security, or communications policies that would limit or guide the use of AI on the site?	Currently none.
You mentioned 15 hours/month as the intended effort for site maintenance. Have you similarly scoped your budget for site enhancements and additional development efforts (ie: improved Navigation & UX, and redesigned home page)?	Complete budget will be determined based on proposals received.
Please provide an inventory of currently used modules	Full inventory will be provided with selected vendor
Please provide examples of support requests over the last 3 months and a high level overview of the number of requests and the general priority of those requests.	Around 70-100 tasks are submitted a year with around 50% being high priority

Will support requests be managed as part of existing IIE systems, or are you willing to be onboarded onto your partners systems and workflows for faster support times?	Yes, we can use selected vendor's task management system.
Do you currently have a baseline accessibility audit you would be able to share to help understand the current state?	No
Could IIE clarify expectations regarding after-hours emergency support, including the definition of "critical" issues, escalation procedures, and any required uptime/service availability targets?	Critical issues are if the website is down or functionality is majorly impaired.
Can IIE provide additional information regarding content governance workflows, including the approximate number of content contributors, reviewers, and administrative users across the 130+ countries referenced in the Scope of Work?	Nearly 500 editors, most of which work on editing award pages. These pages go through 4 stages of drafting, editing and review.
Regarding the proposed AI-related enhancements or technology (e.g., chatbots, automated tagging, content discovery), does IIE have any preferred vetted platforms, documented security requirements, privacy constraints, or policies governing the use of generative AI technologies for this federally sponsored program?	Currently none.
Should recurring accessibility audits be included in monthly maintenance hours or priced separately?	Priced out separately
Does IIE/the host provide non-prod environments (DEV/TEST)? Is there an existing Git repo / CI-CD workflow?	IIE will assist vendor. No existing Git currently.
Can IIE provide approximate editorial user counts, content update cadence (including application-cycle seasonality), and site traffic volume?	Nearly 500 editors. Site has 1-1.5million sessions a year. main period for mass content updates is between October and February of each year. Smaller updates are made throughout the rest of year.
Can security documentation from IIE's hosting/platform providers be used where relevant?	Yes, it can be shared with the selected vendor
Do you use any third party software to regularly monitor and crawl the site for items such as broken links, accessibility issues, etc. (e.g. SiteImprove). If yes, we would use these as part of quarterly reports, but the cost for such services is typically billed directly to the client.	Approximately there 280,000 published pages, 20 content items
We understand the site serves a broad international audience, including users who may have varied browser access. Internet Explorer, however, is no longer supported by Microsoft or by most modern web platforms. Can compliance with current versions of Microsoft Edge, Chrome, Firefox, and Safari satisfy the browser support requirement instead?	Yes
Who is the current hosting provider, and will the selected contractor have direct admin access to the hosting environment or work through IIE?	Pantheon. Yes.
Are all 130+ country stakeholders currently using the same CMS editing interface? What are the most common pain points they encounter?	Yes. There are a few small navigation issues, but no major issues.
How many distinct user roles exist in the CMS today, and how granular are the permission levels (e.g., by country, by content type, by workflow stage)?	8 roles (491 active users). Permission levels are by country, content type and workflow stage.
Who currently owns content updates on the IIE side — is there a dedicated web or content team, or is it distributed across program staff?	There is on main Fulbright website POC, but editing responsibilities are distributed across staff.
What level of creative and design autonomy will the selected vendor have in proposing UX or visual improvements, versus working within strict existing templates?	IIE/Fulbright are open to new creative templates as long as they adhere to Fulbright's branding guidelines
Will the selected vendor have full access to Google Analytics data, including historical performance? Are there other analytics tools in use?	Yes, selected vendor will have access to Google Analytics
What does IIE consider a meaningful "conversion" on the site (e.g., Award Search query, application started, contact form submission)?	Applications started are a good reference, but this is currently not fully tracked.
Are there existing accessibility audit reports, analytics reports, or UX research findings that may be shared with shortlisted vendors?	These can be shared with selected vendor.

If the contractor is expected to independently supply and manage these environments, how will workflows and deployments from a contractor-managed environment to the IIE-hosted production environment be handled?

Contractor will manage these environments. IIE will assist.

Does IIE have any existing accessibility compliance tools?

Not currently

Question

What do IIE feel are the strongest and most impactful pain points for end users while finding and exploring the website?

What are the strongest and most impactful pain points for internal teams currently tasked with content development and website maintenance?

Can IIE please confirm the URL for the sponsors communication guidance? The current URL does not appear to be correct.

Roughly how many award records exist in the Fulbright US Scholar Program Awards Search, and what is the typical annual churn (new/edited/archived awards)?

For the proposed formal UX research/user testing, what is the expected sample size and participant recruitment approach?

Has IIE already conducted any user research, usability testing, analytics analysis, or stakeholder feedback collection that could help inform future UX/navigation improvements?

Could you provide additional information about the current Awards Search architecture, including any known usability, search relevancy, performance, or content management challenges?

Are there specific website metrics IIE currently uses or would like to use to evaluate success, such as award search usage, application starts, completed applications, accessibility scores, search performance, or user satisfaction?

Are there seasonal peaks, application cycles, award launches, or blackout periods that should shape the support model and transition plan?

Who is your target audience for these enhancements? Prospective Fulbright scholars or government entities who fund the scholarships? (Congress, aides, executive branch)

The RFP mentions maintenance of multiple domains, but also specifies that the work will focus on <https://fulbrightscholars.org/>. Can you clarify how many domains will be under the vendor's purview and what those domains are?

The "Quarterly check-up" requirement is clear, but it ends with "Monthly reports will be emailed". Are you asking for both? Is there a difference between what monthly reports include vs the quarterly reports?

Can IIE provide more detail on the custom site search, including technology, indexed content, permissions, and known issues?

Is there an existing API or data model for the planned liaison directory integration?

Is there a target launch date for the redesigned homepage and award pages, and is this work funded within Year 1 or scoped as a separate project?

Response

The site contain a lot of information for the Fulbright U.S. Scholar and Fulbright Visiting Scholar Programs, which means navigating the site and trying to find the information you are looking for can be difficult

No major issues, but would be would like to increase editing functionality to better organzie and display content on some pages.

The Department of State is currently revising the ECA Communications Guidance. IIE will work with the selected vendor regarding the sponsor's communications guidance. As of the writing of this response, a checklist of can be found here - https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/checklist_communications_guidance_0.pdf

Around 400 awards each year, most of them are duplicated each year.

This will be decided with selected vendor.

Not recently.

Navigation of Award pages can be difficult for users.

Application starts

Peak editing season is October-February, we received highest traffic in August-September around the application deadline.

Prospective applicants to Fulbright U.S. Scholar program are key audience. Other audiences include U.S. Scholar and Visiting Scholar Program participants and program stakeholders.

There is an API with another website (<https://us.fulbrightonline.org/pdr/>), but vendor will just be responsible for <https://fulbrightscholars.org/>

The final reporting frequency and content will be established in coordination with the selected vendor during contract negotiation. Quarterly reporting is anticipated as the standard cadence; however, IIE may request monthly reports during the initial phase of the engagement or as needed to support performance monitoring. Reporting frequency may be adjusted as the engagement matures and consistent performance is demonstrated.

Website search uses Solr

No

No, dates for these project are still to be determined

<p>What does success look like at the end of Year 1 of this engagement? Are there specific metrics, milestones, or outcomes IIE will use to evaluate performance?</p>	<p>IIE does not prescribe specific website metrics, milestones, or outcomes for Year 1. Success will be evaluated based on the vendor’s ability to deliver reliable, high-quality website maintenance and development services, including consistent system availability, timely issue resolution, effective implementation of enhancements, and clear communication and reporting. Demonstrated ability to meet agreed service levels, respond to evolving requirements, and support a stable and secure user experience will be key indicators of successful performance.</p>
<p>How would you characterize the current relationship between IIE's internal team and the existing vendor? What has worked well, and what hasn't?</p>	<p>Do not answer</p>
<p>Is IIE looking for the vendor to assist with content strategy, copywriting, or information architecture — or is the scope limited to technical implementation and maintenance?</p>	<p>Scoped is limited to technical implementation and maintenance</p>
<p>Is ECA (the U.S. Department of State) involved in approving design or development changes, and if so, what does that approval process look like and how long does it typically take?</p>	<p>No, they are not involved in day to day approvals. They will need to review any significant changes or updates to the site.</p>
<p>Are there any planned platform migrations, technology changes, or major initiatives that the selected vendor should be aware of or plan around?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Are there specific site traffic or engagement goals tied to Fulbright's recruitment objectives that should inform how the vendor prioritizes enhancements?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>What is IIE's typical turnaround time for approvals on design mockups, content changes, or new feature deployments?</p>	<p>This varies depending on the project, level of review and it's timeline</p>
<p>How does IIE envision the division of responsibilities between the selected vendor and IIE's internal staff on a day-to-day basis?</p>	<p>IIE will be responsible for content updates but will require vendor to provide technical support if and when technical issues arise or development projects are requested</p>
<p>Are there any procurement, legal, or U.S. government compliance requirements (beyond those listed in Attachment C) that could affect vendor onboarding, tool selection, or data handling?</p>	<p>Please see https://www.iie.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/IIEContractorTCs2025.pdf for a copy of IIE's general contract template. The template contains the applicable requirements.</p>
<p>Are there any blackout periods — such as application cycles or major program announcements — during which site changes should be limited or avoided?</p>	<p>There is a two week blackout during early February just before we launch the application</p>

End of Questions and Answers