



Request for Proposals (RFP)

To : Offerors
From : Institute of International Education, Inc. (IIE)
Subject : Gilman Program Website Development and Maintenance

RFP No. : 07082026/AK
RFP Issue Date : Wednesday, July 8, 2026

Deadline for Submission of Questions:
: Friday, July 17, 2026

Responses to Questions Released:
: Friday, July 24, 2026

RFP Closing Date : Monday, August 3, 2026
RFP Closing Time : 5 PM EDT

Semi-Finalist Demonstrations
: Week of August 17 - 21, 2026

Offerors Notified of Decision : On or about Monday, August 24, 2026

Anticipated Start of Work : On or about October 1, 2026

Performance Period : October 1, 2026 – September 30, 2027 (one year with up to 4 option years)

Enclosed is a Request for Proposals (RFP). IIE invites qualified firms and organizations (“Offerors”) to submit a best-value proposal for the requested services. The Contract resulting from this award will be a **USG-Funded Contractor Agreement** serving the below mentioned program.

Offerors are encouraged to read this RFP in its entirety (including any and all attachments), paying specific attention to the instructions and requirements included herein. Issuance of this solicitation does not, in any way, obligate the Institute of International Education (IIE) to award a contract, nor will IIE pay for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal. The agreement resulting from this RFP will be provided to the most responsive Offeror(s) whose Offer will be the most advantageous to IIE in terms of cost, functionality, and other factors as specified in this RFP.

The required services are described in the **“Statement of Work” in Attachment A**. IIE encourages your organization to indicate its interest in this RFP by submitting a proposal according to the instructions in **“Proposal Preparation Instructions”**. Proposals will be evaluated based on the **“Evaluation Criteria”**.

All proposals are due by the dates and times stated above. Any proposal received after the required time and date specified for receipt shall be considered late and non-responsive. Late proposals will not be evaluated.

Questions: Any questions are to be submitted **in writing** via email to the email address listed below no later than the date listed above. No questions will be entertained if they are received by means other than the specified email address. No oral answers will be provided. Answers to questions IIE deems relevant to this RFP will be published on or about the date listed above on IIE’s website under Subawards and Procurement (<https://www.iie.org/Work-With-Us/Subawards-Procurements>).

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Proposal Submission: Proposals, including any attachments (limited to 6MB), should be sent electronically in PDF format to: Acallahan@iie.org Be sure to include in the subject line: **Gilman Program Website Development and Maintenance**. IIE will not accept proposals received by fax.

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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Background: Institute of International Education

The Institute of International Education (“IIE” or the “Institute”) is a New York not-for-profit corporation that is among the world’s largest and most experienced international education and training organizations. Founded in 1919, IIE promotes educational exchange around the world through a wealth of programs and services including Fellowship and Scholarship Management, Higher Education Institutional Development, Emergency Student and Scholar Assistance, and Leadership Development.

For more than 100 years, IIE has promoted educational exchange around the world. The Institute currently implements more than 200 programs benefiting 40,000 participants from 183 countries. In addition to the U.S. Department of State, program sponsors include: major philanthropic foundations; private and public corporations; foreign governments; and individuals.

With IIE’s global headquarters in New York City, IIE has offices around the world, including offices in the United States (Washington D.C., Chicago, Houston and San Francisco) and in other countries (China, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Thailand, and Ukraine).

The Gilman Program

The U.S. Department of State’s Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program (Gilman Program) provides up to \$5,000 in merit-based scholarships to American undergraduate students with high financial need to pursue credit-bearing academic studies and career-oriented internships abroad.

Purpose of Request for Proposal

The Gilman Program is seeking a full-service website development company with expertise in development, design, and maintenance of the website of the Gilman program.

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (“RFP”) is to invite bidders to submit a proposal for a website development company to provide ongoing support, maintain, enhance, and improve the current Gilman Program website; and enhance and improve existing functionality that adheres to the stipulations and needs as described in this request for proposal. Pending the availability of funds and the approval of the Gilman sponsor (The U.S. Department of State), IIE may consider a website redesign and other major website projects in future years.

The information presented in this RFP is furnished solely for the purpose of assisting the bidder in making its own evaluation of the Scope of Work and does not purport to be all-inclusive or to contain all the information you may require. This RFP is not an offer by IIE to contract, but rather an attempt to establish a common framework for IIE to evaluate potential suppliers. The bidder

should make its own investigations, projections and conclusions to verify independently the information contained in this RFP, and to obtain any additional information that it may require, prior to submitting a proposal.

Note: An incumbent contractor currently provides website maintenance and development services for the Gilman website. The incumbent is eligible to submit a proposal. If a transition to a new provider occurs, IIE will manage the transition process and facilitate transfer of available documentation, credentials, and technical information.

SECTION 2: RFP CONDITIONS

IIE reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability to any potential Offeror or other party.
- Accept other than the lowest price offered.
- Award a contract on the basis of initial offers received, without discussions or requests for best and final offers.
- Award more than one contract.

Nothing in this RFP is, or should be relied on by Offeror as a promise or representation by IIE. IIE does not make any representation or warranty as to the completeness of this RFP or have any liability for any representations (express or implied) contained in, or omissions from, this RFP. This RFP and any replies to any written notifications are transmitted to the Offeror solely for the purposes of the Offeror preparing and submitting a Proposal.

Any information or materials submitted in response to this RFP and/or as a proposal (whether successful or unsuccessful) shall become the property of IIE and will not be returned.

In submitting a proposal, you must agree that your offer shall remain firm for a period of no less than **120** days from the RFP closing date.

Failure to follow the specifications and requirements provided in this RFP may result in disqualification.

The successful Offeror will be obligated to enter into an agreement containing the same or substantially similar terms and conditions found at: <https://www.iie.org/Work-With-Us/Subawards-Procurements/Solicitations-for-Goods-and-Services>. The terms and conditions may be changed, added to, deleted or modified by IIE prior to awarding the agreement. Other terms and conditions may be negotiated between IIE and the successful Offeror, at IIE's discretion. State Universities and Agencies should not expect or ask IIE to modify its Terms and Conditions to incorporate any State Regulations or Statutes.

SECTION 3: PROPOSAL PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals are expected to be comprehensive and include the information set forth below. Offerors are also invited to send any additional information or supplemental material they believe will aid IIE in properly evaluating their service offerings. Any such additional information must be included within the stated page limitations. Please be sure to respond to each of the elements requested and frame your answers in direct response to the information being sought.

Proposal Page Limitation: Proposals must not exceed the page limitations specified in this RFP. IIE reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to disregard, decline to review, or otherwise exclude from evaluation any pages exceeding the stated page limit. Offerors are responsible for ensuring that all information necessary for evaluation is contained within the allowable page limit.

Include only your own work and no text copied from sources outside of your organization, unless those sources are adequately cited and credited. Offerors are encouraged to limit the use of graphics, photographs, screenshots, and other visual elements to those that are directly relevant and necessary to support the proposal narrative. In order to be qualified for this RFP, all Offerors are requested to provide the following information, and format their proposal as follows:

Technical Proposal – 15 page limit

- 1. Letter of transmittal**
- 2. Table of Contents**
- 3. Executive Summary**
- 4. Basic information**
 - Legal name, registered address, and “Remit to” mailing address, if different from registered address
 - Name of authorized representative for this RFP, with telephone number(s), and e-mail address
 - General information about your organization and the services it offers
- 5. Qualifications and Capabilities**
 - Brief description of the organization/entity and experience in the field that illustrates overall services and capabilities to meet the terms of the RFP
 - Years of relevant experience
 - Any plans to outsource/subcontract the services or any part thereof
- 6. Current and Past Performance and Experience**

Document and summarize your proven track record of successfully implementing similar activities.

 - Using the table format provided below, please list only the relevant projects you implemented within the past 3 years, a brief description of how each is relevant to the scope of the RFP, and the contact details for each previous client or donor.
 - You must include a list of at least 3 but no more than 5 websites that you currently manage. Include the URL for each website. At least 3 websites must not be IIE owned or managed websites.
 - Make sure to include any lessons learned.

#	(a) Name of Organization	(b) Activity Title	(c) Locations of activity	(d) Synopsis of the activity and relevance to this RFP	(e) Performance period (date and duration)	(f) Cost for the activity	(g) Name & Contact Info (E-mail <u>and</u> phone)
1							
2							
3							

7. Implementation of the Statement of Work

- Detailed description of the services being offered and any information relevant to meeting the technical specifications stated in **Attachment A. Make sure to describe any innovative approaches or technology you plan to use.**
- Describe your ideas for potential upgrades, renovations or other projects not specifically mentioned in the scope of work. IIE strongly encourages offerors to be creative and to bring new ideas.
- Implementation plan, and reasoning behind the plan chosen
 - Include proposed response times that should be at least as fast as the response times mentioned in the Scope of Work.
- Methodology, and reasoning behind the methodology chosen
- Quality control plan including:
 - A description of internal review procedures that facilitate high-quality standards
 - How quality control will be managed when completing multiple projects for multiple clients
- Exceptions to the RFP, additional or different ideas, in the statement of work and other requirements should be expressly noted
- Describe your process and timeline when collaborating with another solution provider should there be a transition period between IIE's current solution and your proposed solution.

Cost Proposal – 2 page limit (not included as part of the 15-page limit on the Technical Proposal)

- Submit a detailed cost proposal, in U.S. dollars, in the recommended format shown in **Attachment B**
- Include any additional cost items that the Offeror wishes to propose
- Include any proposed discounts, including any discounts for working with not-for-profit organizations

- If Offerors would like to propose more than one set of service levels and response times please be sure that the cost differential between the options is clearly shown.
- Total cost proposed

SECTION 4: TERMS OF PAYMENT

Payment terms for the award shall be approximately net thirty (30) days after satisfactory completion of each deliverable or milestone agreed upon and established in the resulting agreement. Payment shall be made by the Institute of International Education (“IIE”) via check or electronic funds transfer/bank wire. The final payment terms in the contract will control, not this RFP. No advance payments will be provided.

SECTION 5: EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

Item	Requirement	Points Available
1) Technical Approach to Required Elements of Scope of Work	IIE is seeking proposals that demonstrate strong capabilities managing website maintenance and development	40 points
2) Technical Approach to Proposed Creative Elements	IIE is seeking innovative new ideas regarding how to approach the Gilman Program website. Higher points will be awarded to proposals that demonstrate a creative approach to the Gilman Program website.	20 points
3) 6. Current and Past Performance and Experience	IIE is seeking proposals that demonstrate strong performance in similar past projects.	15 points
4) Cost Proposal	IIE’s review of the cost proposal shall determine if the overall costs proposed are realistic for the work to be performed, reflect a correct understanding of the project requirements, and are consistent with the Offeror’s technical proposal.	25 points
Total		100 points

SECTION 6: ANNUAL RENEWAL:

Annual Renewal: Selection(s) may be renewed annually, at IIE’s sole discretion, for up to five years before re-competition. IIE reserves the right to exercise any one of the following options:

- Accept the updated proposal if changes are reasonable and within the scope of the original selection;
- Negotiate any updates/changes; or,
- Decide not to renew.

ATTACHMENT A STATEMENT OF WORK

The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program currently maintains one primary website: <https://www.gilmanscholarship.org>. The platform used for this website is WordPress. The primary purpose of the Gilman Scholarship Program's website is to support potential applicants, scholarship recipients and advisors with clear, timely, and user-friendly information and resources.

IIE is seeking a full-service website maintenance and development service provider to ensure that this website continues to meet the needs of its sponsor (United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs - ECA) and its users (Gilman Program advisors on U.S. campuses, prospective applicants, Gilman Program recipients, and the general public). The main priorities of the websites are to:

- Present a clear overview of the program and the application process to prospective applicants and program advisors
- Provide resources and materials to applicants, current Gilman Scholars, alumni, and program advisors
- Serve as a point of reference for outside stakeholders and the general public about the mission and impact of the Gilman Program

Responsibilities of the selected contractor will include:

Maintenance

- Managing and maintaining the domain, including technical support with our webhost and website security company
- Website security (described in detail below)
- Completing regular repairs as needed to scripting languages, basic HTML, cascading style sheets, broken images, broken links and all other malfunctioning code or components
- Daily website backups and restore points that will be archived and accessible
- Completing regular software and plugin updates for all frameworks
- Updating the staging copy of the site, including:
 1. Update WP core files
 2. Update plugins and themes
- Checking the staging site for errors (WP logs and Developer Inspector console)
- Doing a human / visual comparison of the live (un-updated) site to the staging site to find any problems or display changes introduced while doing the updates
- Repairing any issues that arise including plugin conflicts, changes to styling of content handled by plugins, undesirable changes in functionality
- Testing all site functionality to make sure all aspects of the site are still functioning properly, including:
 1. All pages loading and looking as they previously appeared
 2. Mobile testing of the site on one Apple device (latest version of iOS) and one Android device
 3. Weekly reporting of broken links, broken images and broken videos

- Managing Google Analytics and Advanced Analytics to provide analysis, including traffic pattern analysis, predictive analytics, and cross-channel analytics and attribution. Heat Map Generation to provide the ability to create heat maps of user activity (i.e., where users are clicking most often).
- SEO support to ensure timely updates to search results and optimization to reach relevant audiences
- Consulting on Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) and AI search-friendly content, ensuring content captured by AI is regularly updated and accurate.
- Consulting on and ensuring the completion of requests for support, updates, and triage
- Quarterly check-up: at the end of each quarter the contractor will check for any broken contact forms and other interactive elements and provide a report upon request at the end of each quarter. This report should also include site traffic statistics and search engine analysis reports. Reports will be emailed when complete.
- Responding to all maintenance requests within 3 hours on weekdays and 18 hours on weekends, via email, with a confirmation that the request was received and an estimated completion date for each action item in the request
- Ensure compatibility with Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act, which states that federal agencies must ensure that public access to information for people with disabilities is comparable to access available to others; the website should comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 level AA.

Development and Design

- Designing additional website pages as needed
- Aiding in the design of new slides for hero banner
- Custom templates for special events or campaigns as needed
- Consulting with IIE's Website Manager on any issues or projects and development
- Consulting on the creation or purchase of any new website assets
- Implementing, customizing, and maintaining AI tools and features for the website as needed, such as a chatbot

Pending the availability of funding and approval, IIE may be interested in a larger scale redevelopment of the Gilman website. Offerors must demonstrate the ability to do a redevelopment of the website and include applicable labor and other rates in the cost section of the proposal. Offerors may include suggestions for possible future development of the website. For clarity, website redevelopment is not included in the base maintenance scope and is not guaranteed to occur. Any potential future redevelopment efforts will be handled through contract amendments.

Website Security

VISUAL AND USER INTERFACE DESIGN / Web Design Mockup

Design and all related components will be in accordance with WCAG 2.1 AA best practices and vetted through a Contractor In-House Accessibility Specialist.

ACCESSIBILITY

Contractor will support WCAG 2.1 AA standards for launch. Contractor will not be responsible for any accessibility issues based on content entry from IIE.

In addition, Contractor will design and conduct accessibility audits and testing for measuring a wide range of accessibility standards directly within the site admin, with a clear and simple set of checkmarks while editing a page so editors can quickly validate and/or correct pages to ensure they meet standards.

MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENTS

Routine CMS and module updates will be scheduled monthly. In addition to patching and security updates, Contractor will collaborate with IIE to implement site enhancements, such as new features, UI improvements, navigation updates, or accessibility upgrades. Enhancement ideas may originate from IIE requests or be proactively recommended by the agency based on emerging trends, CMS advancements, or recent successful implementations. Recent examples include AI-integrated features to support content creation.

Hosting

The WordPress Gilman website is currently hosted by IIE on WP Engine. IIE currently plans on continuing the arrangement. However, offerors may suggest alternative hosting arrangements in their proposals. Please note that IIE is not interested in solutions in which the website is hosted on the offerors private servers.

ATTACHMENT B COST PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

Submit a detailed budget for the services described in the technical proposal. IIE's review of the cost proposal shall determine if the overall costs proposed are: realistic for the work to be performed, reflect a correct understanding of the project requirements, and are consistent with the Offeror's Technical Proposal.

The following is a format may be used as a guide to assist you in the preparation of the cost proposal. You may submit the cost proposal using this form or in the format of your choice (plain sheets, your own form, or a variation of this form). The Offeror may list any cost line items, breaking down all "lump sum" items as much as reasonably possible.

Rate Type	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Monthly Maintenance—including 10 hours of support (fixed)					
Website Design (specify whether blended, hourly or daily)					
Website Development (specify whether blended, hourly or daily)					
Other Proposed Rates					

IIE anticipates 10 hours per month of monthly maintenance but offerors may suggest different service levels. Offerors should clearly indicate if they allow for the rollover of unused hours and, if so, the terms of how the rollover hours may be utilized.

Include any cost differentials based on proposed service response times.

ATTACHMENT C - ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Third-Party IT Risk Management Process (TPRM)

An **IT Security Questionnaire** is required prior to signing a contract if the vendor will process IIE proprietary data or Personal Data according to GDPR's definition on behalf of IIE or connect to IIE's network.

Note: Offerors are not required to complete the questionnaire or submit supporting documentation at the proposal stage.

- Vendors who can furnish evidence of an **ISO 27001 Certification** are asked to attach such documentation and to provide their up-to-date **System and Organization Controls (SOC) 2 Type 2 Attestation**.
- Vendors who cannot furnish IIE with ISO 27001 Certification evidence will be asked to provide a **SOC 2 Type 2 attestation** and complete a **security assessment that is mapped to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cyber Security Framework (CSF)**. NIST is a guidance, based on existing standards, guidelines, and practices for organizations to better manage and reduce cybersecurity risk. The NIST CSF consists of five concurrent and continuous Functions—Identify, Protect, Detect, Respond, Recover. When considered together, these Functions provide a high-level, strategic view of the lifecycle of an organization's cybersecurity risk management.
- If your organization does not wish to complete this request using the automated OneTrust platform, please visit the "Welcome" screen of the IT Security Questionnaire (using the emailed link from OneTrust) and click "*Complete Offline Using Excel*" to download the **Excel** version of the NIST CSF assessment. Please make sure to upload the completed file to OneTrust using the same path and **Submit**.

Prohibition on certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment

IIE cannot enter into a contract to procure or obtain equipment, services, or systems that uses covered telecommunications equipment or services as a substantial or essential component of any system, or as critical technology as part of any system. As described in [Public Law 115-232](#), section 889, covered telecommunications equipment is telecommunications equipment produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities).

Covered equipment and services must not be part of your offer to IIE.