

U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council, Inc.

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United States Department Of State Allocating US\$400,000.00 For “*Priority Program*” To Support The Re-Emerging Private Sector In The Republic Of Cuba And Seeks To Include “*Shark Tank Style*” Recruitment Progress.

Does United States Department Of State Want CNBC To Broadcast “*Shark Tank Cubano*”?

Yet, Entrenched And Uncreative Foggy Bottom Bureaucracy During Biden-Harris Administration (2021-) Continues To Resist Completing Direct Correspondent Banking Process Commenced During Obama-Biden Administration (2009-2017). Why?

Most Impactful Issue Remains Delay Of Nearing Three Years For Diaz-Canel-Valdes Mesa Administration (2019-) To Publish Regulations To Authorize Micro, Small, And Medium-Size Enterprises (MSMEs) To Receive Direct Foreign Investment And Direct Foreign Financing. An Absurd Delay Given The Chronic Decay Continuing To Permeate The Commercial, Economic, And Financial Infrastructure Throughout The Republic Of Cuba.

According To The United States Department Of State, All programs must... “*strengthen private enterprise and build partnerships between citizens of the United States and Cuban citizens living in Cuba*” And Show “... *how to grow their business, including through developing import/export ties with businesses in the United States.*”

What Is Often Among The First Questions Owners And Managers Of MSMEs Ask About Connectivity With The United States? How To Efficiently And Cost-Effectively Move Funds From The Republic Of Cuba And To The Republic Of Cuba So They May Receive Direct Investment And Direct Financing From Sources In The United States.

The Biden-Harris Administration Could Authorize Direct Correspondent Banking, But Has Stubbornly Refused To Do So. The Obama-Biden Administration Did Authorize United States-Based Financial Institutions To Maintain Accounts With Republic Of Cuba Government-Operated Financial Institutions, But Prohibited Republic Of Cuba Government-Operated Financial Institutions From Maintaining Accounts With United States-Based Financial Institutions. *The Result?* Funds Having To Move Through Third Countries- Costly, Inefficient, Unsecure- And Providing Unnecessary Profits To Third-Country Financial Institutions.

According To The United States Department Of State, “*Since the announcement in March of 2021, the Cuban government has licensed over 10,000 privately owned businesses in every possible sector.*” Not True. There Are Important Sectors Of The Economy Where The Re-Emerging Private Sector Has Thus Far Been Excluded- And Those Are Sectors Where They Could Have A Profound Impact.

Links To Related Analyses

[Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov Today Visits Cuba. By Focusing Upon Expanding MSMEs, He Can Help Russia Make Money- And Help United States Capital Support MSMEs. Not A Perfect Alliance.](#) Feb 18, 2024

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[List Of Every Product Exported From U.S. To Cuba In 2023. U.S. Ag Commodity/Food Exports Up 4.2%- Including US\\$5.4 Million In Coffee. US\\$24 Million To MSMEs Including US\\$8 Million In Vehicles. Feb 13, 2024](#)

[Arrest Of "Super Mule" In Tampa For Illegally Transporting US\\$100,000.00 To U.S. From Cuba Not Surprising... May Have Transported US\\$4.5 Million In Last Nine Months. Feb 7, 2024](#)

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON DC**

U.S. EMBASSY HAVANA, PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Funding Opportunity Title: U.S. Embassy Havana PAS Small Grant Program in Support of the Cuban Private Sector

Funding Opportunity Number: PAS-HAV-FY24-SG

Deadline for Applications: April 5, 2024

CFDA Number: 19.040 – Public Diplomacy Programs

Total Amount Available: \$400,000

Maximum for Each Award: \$150,000

Minimum for Each Award: \$50,000

This notice is subject to the availability of funding.

<https://cu.usembassy.gov/notice-of-funding-opportunity-u-s-embassy-havana-pas-small-grant-program-in-support-of-the-cuban-private-sector/>

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Havana is pleased to announce funding availability through its Public Diplomacy Small Grants Program for projects designed to provide support for Cuba's emerging private sector. In the midst of one of the most significant economic downturns in Cuban history, the Cuban government now allows the creation of privately held small and medium-sized enterprises. Since the announcement in March of 2021, the Cuban government has licensed over 10,000 privately owned businesses in every possible sector. However, since most Cuban citizens grew up in a communist system that did not allow private business, Cubans often lack the experience required to turn an idea into a thriving business that will provide income to the business owners, employment for other Cuban citizens, and goods and services needed to meet shortfalls in what the government provides. The Cuban private sector also faces criticism

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both from internal and external audiences. In addition, the economic downturn has led hundreds of thousands of Cubans to leave their country through any means available in search of better lives for themselves and their families. Helping Cuba businesses grow and thrive can provide economically viable opportunities to many who would prefer to stay but see no way to provide for their families.

Please carefully follow all instructions below.

Purpose of Small Grants

PAS Havana invites proposals for programs that will strengthen the emerging Cuban private sector by facilitating the transfer of American know-how and values to emerging entrepreneurs, expanding entrepreneurship opportunities to a broader, more diverse audience, and strengthening ties between American and Cuban businesses to benefit both. Proposed programs should carefully consider how to provide an effective mix of materials generally applicable to starting and running a business and how those materials must be adapted to the unique and complex Cuban business environment. To be successful, all programs must include a U.S. business and/or educational element or connection with American expert/s, organization/s, or institution/s, demonstrate a clear understanding of the Cuban context, and demonstrate the capacity to deliver proposed programming in Cuba (ideally in cooperation with a Cuban partner/mentors/instructors, etc.) in a way that will strengthen private enterprise and build partnerships between citizens of the United States and Cuban citizens living in Cuba. Each proposed project should also include a media strategy designed to expand the project's impact beyond those who participated in the actual project. Finally, all proposals must include a plan for vetting potential program participants to ensure grant funds are not used to support businesses or individuals with close ties to the Cuban government or Cuban Communist party.

Priority Program Areas: This Notice of Funding Opportunity supports U.S. Embassy Havana's strategic objective of building a healthy private sector in Cuba that will grow the economy, provide access to needed goods and services, and encourage Cubans to stay in Cuba rather than seek to emigrate to the United States. Through a consultative process, the U.S. Embassy in Havana has determined that it will focus its resources on the following four areas: Basic information for aspiring entrepreneurs about how to take an idea through the process of starting and running a small business. More advanced information and networking opportunities, aimed at current small business owners, about how to grow their business, including through developing import/export ties with businesses in the United States, understanding OFAC regulations, inclusion in the workplace, etc. Information about how to grow a business, aimed at more established medium-sized business owners, including specific training and development for CEOs, line managers, HR professionals, etc., that will allow companies to grow to the next level. Sector-specific mentoring and networking opportunities that connect Cuban businesses with experienced Americans who have similar kinds of businesses and allow them to benefit from their experience and know-how.

A wide range of projects related to these priority program areas will be considered, including, but not limited to, the following activities: A Cuba-specific, monthly, or bi-monthly speaker series featuring American experts who provide information for beginning entrepreneurs as well as more specific and advanced consultations for entrepreneurs with more experience. Networking events with visiting speakers that connect alumni of USG programs with alumni of other programs active on the island and allow Cuban entrepreneurs opportunities to share their experiences with colleagues and mentor those starting out. A mentoring program that connects sector-specific American experts with Cubans working in the same sector. Training for line managers to help

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companies grow beyond the company's founders. Expanding the Cuban private sector's understanding of Human Resources and topics of workplace inclusion. Training for new entrepreneurs available online, adapted to and available free of charge for anyone living in Cuba. Work to adapt and "Cubanize" existing Spanish-language online training for entrepreneurs, to include specific examples in the Cuban context and advice, tips, etc., from experienced Cuban entrepreneurs. Coding bootcamps or other programs designed to encourage IT skills that are marketable to U.S. firms, especially programs that may connect successful participants to jobs that can do from Cuba. A "Shark Tank" style program that recruits a broad group of entrepreneurs, provides general training to all, then winnows the group, providing more focused training and mentorship at each stage until a small group of winners is awarded seed capital and additional mentoring.

Desired Results and Illustrative Indicators:

By the end of the project, grantees should demonstrate that their project has contributed to advancing the development of the independent private sector in Cuba. Grant proposals, including a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (M&E) with regular milestones and end-of-project targets, together with anticipated results and key performance indicators, will be given priority. Illustrative outcome and output indicators for the projects are provided below. The recipient is expected to identify targets for project indicators based on what it can reasonably achieve within the project's performance period and based on the expected overall project results described above.

<i>Example/Illustrative Outcome Indicators</i>	<i>Illustrative targets:</i>
Percentage of participants who have opened a private business.	TBD
Percentage of participants that increased their knowledge about a specific topic.	TBD
Percentage of participants who increased the size of their business six months after participation.	TBD

<i>Example/Illustrative Output Indicators</i>	<i>Illustrative targets:</i>
Number of program participants	TBD
Number of engagements on a social media post	TBD

Participants and Audiences:

Embassy Havana encourages projects focusing on a wide range of audiences, with a particular emphasis on expanding the opportunities of entrepreneurship to a broader, more diverse audience, including groups from socially and/or economically disadvantaged communities.

The following types of programs are not eligible for funding: Programs relating to partisan political activity. Charitable or development activities. Construction programs. Programs that support specific religious activities. Fundraising campaigns. Lobbying for specific legislation or programs. Scientific research. Programs intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the organization or Programs that duplicate existing programs.

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B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: Up to 12 months

Number of awards anticipated: PAS Havana anticipates issuing several awards under this NOFO, pending availability of funds.

Award amounts: \$300,000

Maximum for Each Award: \$150,000

Minimum for Each Award: \$50,000

Type of Funding: Fiscal Year 2024 Public Diplomacy Funding

Anticipated program start date: Grant applications selected for funding under this NOFO (PAS-HAV-FY24-SG) must begin implementation before September 30, 2024.

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant, Sub-Grant, or Cooperative Agreement

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs must be completed in 12 months or less. PAS will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the US Department of State.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants

The following organizations and entities in the United States are eligible to apply. Organizations must be legally registered: Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with programming experience – Non-profit educational and cultural institutions – For-profit or commercial entities are not eligible to apply.

Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing is allowed but not required. This will not impact funding decisions.

Other Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov and a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered on SAM.gov.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4. Address to Request Application Package

Application must be sent to USEmbassyHavanaGrants@state.gov

5. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals should be submitted in English and be no more than five pages (including all attachments). Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Applicant Information

Please ensure: The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity. No more than five pages, including attachments. All documents are in English. All budgets are in U.S. dollars. All pages are numbered. Attachments required below (i.e., resumes, support letters from program partners, permission letters) do not count toward the page limit. All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper, and All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins. The following documents are strictly required for all application submissions:

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Descriptive Project Title/Summary Coversheet: Cover sheet stating the applicant's name and organization (if any), program and year, proposal date, program title, program period proposed start and end date, and brief program purpose.

Any Previous U.S. Government Funding: Year and project title of all previous grants from the US Embassy and/or US government agencies.

Proposal: The proposal should contain sufficient information so anyone unfamiliar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

– **Proposal Summary:** Provide a short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact.

– **Introduction to the Organization or Individual applying:** Provide a description of past and present operations, showing the ability to carry out the program.

– **Problem Statement:** Provide a clear, concise, and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed.

– **Program Goals and Objectives:** List the overall project goal and describe what the program is intended to achieve. How does the proposed project connect to the Priority Program Areas described above? Please also list the primary sub-goals or objectives that should be reached as part of the project to show progress toward the overall goal. Objectives should be clearly achievable and measurable. Please also describe the plan for vetting perspective program participants to ensure grant funds are not used to support businesses or individuals with close ties to the Cuban government or Cuban Communist party.

– **Program Activities:** Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.

– **Program Methods and Design:** Describe how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal.

– **Proposed Program Schedule:** Provide a proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.

– **Media Plan:** Describe how the program will make use of media/social media to recruit, share key educational elements with members of the target audience who could not participate, amplify main program messages, etc.

– **Key Personnel:** List the names, titles, roles, and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. What proportion of their time will be used in support of this program?

– **Program Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees, if any. U.S.-based applicants should describe how they will provide effective programming on the ground in Cuba, including a description of partners in Cuba, where appropriate.

– **Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** Provide a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan. How will the activities be monitored to ensure they are happening in a timely manner, and how will the program be evaluated to ensure it meets the goals of the grant? How will you measure progress toward the overall goal and toward each objective?

– **Future Funding or Sustainability:** Describe plans for continuing the program beyond the grant period or the availability of other resources, if applicable.

Budget Justification Narrative: Use the budget categories described in sections *H and B. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions*

Attachments

1-page CV or resume of key personnel who are proposed for the program. Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner (*optional*). Official permission letters, if required, for program activities.

Submission Dates and Times

All application materials must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern time on April 5, 2024.

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Funding Restrictions

Grants cannot be used to fund religious or partisan political activity or for: Fundraising campaigns. Commercial projects or for-profit ventures. Individual academic research projects. Construction projects. Projects whose primary objective is an organization's institutional development or an individual's personal enrichment or career development.

Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted in English by email to USEmbassyHavanaGrants@state.gov following all requirements described in this notice.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

9. Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and rated based on the evaluation criteria outlined below. The criteria listed are closely related and are considered in judging the overall quality of an application.

Organizational capacity and record on previous grants (10 points): The organization has expertise in its stated field, and PAS is confident of its ability to undertake the program. This includes a financial management system and a bank account. The organization has a clear capacity to deliver described programming in Cuba and has adequately described the relationships between US and Cuban partners.

Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea (20 points): The program idea is well developed, with details about how program activities will be carried out. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline. The proposal includes a clear media/social media plan that expands the project's reach to include target audience members who could not otherwise participate as well as a clear vetting plan to ensure grant funds are not used to support businesses or individuals with close ties to the Cuban government or Cuban Communist party.

Goals and objectives (20 points): Goals and objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound). The program approach is likely to achieve the proposed goals and objectives.

Supports Embassy priorities (20 points): The project supports US Embassy Cuba's priority areas and target audiences based on the materials submitted. The project seeks to expand entrepreneurship opportunities beyond the current economic elite.

Budget (10 points): The budget justification is detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (10 points): Applicant demonstrates an ability to measure program success against key indicators and provide milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes output and outcome indicators and shows how and when those will be measured.

Sustainability (10 points): Program activities will continue to have a positive impact after the end of the program.

Review and Selection Process

A Grants Review Committee will evaluate all eligible applications.

Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)

For any Federal award under a notice of funding opportunity, if the Federal awarding agency anticipates that the total Federal share will be greater than the simplified acquisition threshold on any Federal award under a notice of funding opportunity may include, over the period of performance (see §200.88 Simplified Acquisition Threshold), this section must also inform applicants: i. That the Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS) (see 41 USC 2313); ii. That an applicant, at

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its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM; iii. That the Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

All grant applications will be received and evaluated on a rolling basis and within the cycle they were received. Upon receiving a proposal, the PAS team will review your application for completeness and confirm via email that it has been successfully received. Please allow between 4-6 weeks of the corresponding cycle's closeout date for information on the outcome of your application. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified via email.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

13. Federal Award Notices

The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document, and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer. If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State. Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the US government, nor does it commit the US government to pay for costs incurred in preparing and submitting proposals. Further, the US government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Payment Method: Payments will be made in at least two installments, as needed, to carry out the program activities.

Reporting

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. Some grants may also require quarterly and other ad hoc reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact PAS at USEmbassyHavanaGrants@state.gov. **Note:** We do not provide any pre-consultation for application-related questions addressed in the NOFO. Once an application has been submitted, State Department officials and staff — both in the Department and at embassies overseas — may not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process is completed.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Personnel: Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff working directly for the applicant on the program and the percentage of their time spent on the program.

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program. If the program involves international travel, include a brief justification statement for that travel.

Equipment: Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property required for the program which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least \$5,000 per unit.

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Supplies: List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices needed for the program. If an item costs more than \$5,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

Contractual: Describe goods and services the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also, describe any sub-awards to non-profit partners that will help carry out the program activities.

Other Direct Costs: Describe other costs directly associated with the program that do not fit the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All “Other” or “Miscellaneous” expenses must be itemized and explained.

Indirect Costs: These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of 10% of the modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68. “Cost Sharing” refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the US Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers’ time and donated venues.

Alcoholic Beverages: Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): If necessary, please allocate reasonable costs for M&E activities.

LINKS TO RELATED ANALYSES

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