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## Request for Grant Proposals for *The 2020 Mexico-U.S. Innovation Fund Competition*

**Issuance Date:** September 17, 2020  
**Question/Answer Period:** September 17, 2020 – February 1, 2021  
Submit questions at [100kstrongamericas.org/questions](https://100kstrongamericas.org/questions)  
**Closing Date:** February 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 **2020 Mexico-United States Innovation Fund Competition** to support higher education partnerships between Mexico 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 **Mary Street Jenkins Foundation, along with the Coca-Cola Mexico Foundation and Sempra Energy.**

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, with 1,400 universities and colleges in the United States.

**The 2020 Mexico-United States Innovation Fund Competition** is designed to support dynamic partnerships between Mexican and United States higher education institutions to work in teams to provide new models of academic training programs for students in multiple academic areas.

The intent of the 2020 Mexico-U.S. Innovation Fund Competition is to award up to **eleven (11) Innovation Fund Grants of up to \$25,000** each to selected proposals developed by teams of higher education institutions in Mexico and in the United States, *pending the proposal evaluation and selection process.*

Special consideration will be given to those Innovation Fund grant proposals focused on developing innovative academic exchange and training programs that will benefit underserved and diverse student populations in both countries. For a complete list of eligible academic areas and other requirements, please see Section III: Description of Grant Opportunity.

NOTE: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. Department of State and Partners of the Americas, in coordination with the Mary Street Jenkins Foundation, the Coca-Cola Mexico Foundation, and Sempra Energy 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.

Since 1954, the **Mary Street Jenkins Foundation** has promoted the growth and prosperity of Mexico by improving the quality of life of its people by spreading hope. The organization was founded by Guillermo Oscar Jenkins and his wife, Mary Street Jenkins, who moved to Mexico from the United States in 1901. After being the first to build a nursery for working mothers at the Corona factory and several schools at Atencingo sugar refinery, the Jenkins family continued to give back to their community, supporting culture, education, health, and sports for more than 65 years. Today, the impact of the Mary Street Jenkins Foundation is clear. Young people have benefited from thousands of scholarships, schools, and sports centers, and they enjoy an improved overall quality of life in the State of Puebla and the rest of the country. The Foundation has improved rural clinics and many hospitals, as well as the provision of clean drinking water and public services in rural communities. Supporting cultural programs has also been one of the main goals for the Jenkins Foundation, exemplified by its support of the Jenkins - Del Toro grant, among many other projects. For more information, visit <https://www.fundacionjenkins.org/>.

Since 1998, the **Coca-Cola Mexico Foundation** has focused on promoting the well-being of communities in Mexico. Historically, the foundation focused on supporting indigenous and rural communities through water access and education programs. Currently, the foundation's pillars are water access and conservation, community recycling and the empowerment of women in the value chain. Through its reforestation program, more than 79 million trees have been planted across Mexico and over 250,000 people have benefited from its water access programs. The foundation plans to provide access to an additional 1 million people by 2030. Furthermore, more than 180,000 women have participated in the women's economic empowerment program and continue to be supported through economic aid and business training through the current COVID-19 context. For more information, visit [www.coca-colamexico.com.mx/fundacion-coca-cola](http://www.coca-colamexico.com.mx/fundacion-coca-cola).

With more than 16,000 employees, the **Sempra Energy** companies develop energy infrastructure, operate utilities, and provide related products and services to more than 32 million consumers worldwide. Sempra Energy was created in 1998 by a merger of parent companies of two long established, and highly respected, investor-owned utilities—Los Angeles-based Pacific Enterprises, the parent company of Southern California Gas Co., and Enova Corporation, the parent company of San Diego Gas & Electric—with rich histories dating back more than a century. Sempra Energy operates two business segments—Sempra Utilities and Sempra Infrastructure—with six principal subsidiaries. Sempra Utilities owns and operates electric and gas utilities in the

U.S. and South America. Sempra Infrastructure invests in, develops, and operates long-term contracted energy infrastructure in the United States and Mexico.

## Section II: Eligibility Information

Higher education institutions (HEIs) located and legally registered in the United States or Mexico are eligible to apply for the 2020 U.S.-Mexico Innovation Fund Competition.

This Innovation Fund competition invites proposals from a diversity of HEIs, including four-year degree-issuing institutions (public and private), community colleges, technical/vocational schools, and other post-secondary institutions with credit-bearing programs. 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.

**Proposals must include a team of at least one higher education institution in the U.S. and one higher education institution in Mexico.** 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

### A. Thematic Requirements

The purpose of the 2020 U.S.-Mexico Innovation Fund Competition is to provide more partnership opportunities for HEIs in the United States and Mexico to work together to create new student exchange and training programs in diverse academic areas. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

GENERAL THEMES	ACADEMIC FIELDS OF STUDY
<b>Public Health</b>	Special emphasis on projects that address needs created by, or topics related to, the COVID-19 pandemic or to future pandemics and public health emergencies.
<b>Distance/Virtual Education</b>	Proposals that will advance students' knowledge and use of distance/virtual education are encouraged. If proposing distance/virtual education, programs must also include student/faculty mobility components between Mexico and the U.S.

<p><b>Sustainable Construction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Design and Architecture</li> <li>• Sustainable Civil Engineering</li> <li>• Environmental Engineering</li> <li>• Materials Sciences</li> <li>• Recycled Construction Materials</li> <li>• Structural Engineering</li> <li>• Earthquake Engineering</li> <li>• Wind Engineering</li> <li>• Architectural Engineering</li> </ul>
<p><b>Biochemistry</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chemistry</li> <li>• Biology</li> <li>• Math</li> <li>• Chemical Engineering</li> </ul>
<p><b>Green/Renewable Energy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renewable Energy Engineering</li> <li>• Energy Economics</li> <li>• Solar/Wind/Hydro/Thermal Power Generation</li> <li>• Battery Storage</li> <li>• Energy Conservation</li> <li>• Geographic Information Systems</li> <li>• Industrial Research and Innovation</li> <li>• Sustainable Business</li> <li>• Public Policy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economic Empowerment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economics</li> <li>• Community Development</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Empowerment of Young People and/or Women</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainable Agriculture</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agroecology</li> <li>• Agronomy</li> <li>• Agricultural Engineering</li> <li>• Food Science</li> <li>• Nutrition Sciences</li> <li>• Soil/Plant Sciences</li> <li>• Agricultural Economics</li> <li>• Ecosystem Science/Management</li> <li>• Food Security</li> <li>• Agricultural Protection</li> </ul>

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

**IMPORTANT:** Please note that the academic fields of study above are not the comprehensive list of eligible areas; rather, they serve as recommendations and guidelines. As long as the proposed program falls under one or more of the general themes above and the proposed academic discipline/s can be sufficiently justified in the proposal, it will be considered eligible.

### **B. Proposal 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.

### **C. Other Requirements & Considerations**

Students must receive some level of credit from their home institution during, or as a result, of the proposed program.

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 Mexico and the United States. 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.

Proposed grant activities should include **both virtual and in-person** training programming between the partnering institutions and support sending and hosting students and faculty between the institutions during the grant period. Applicants should also highlight how a grant from the Innovation Fund would impact HEI teams' ability to secure additional resources from alternative sources to sustain the proposed student exchange and training programs between Mexico and the United States beyond the Innovation Fund grant period.

Special consideration will be given to proposals focused on programs that benefit underserved or non-traditional student populations in both countries. Applicants that seek to target or include

underrepresented students **must provide a recruitment strategy/plan** for reaching these diverse groups.

The Innovation Fund encourages proposals that 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., NAFSA, CCID, HACU, FAUBAI, AIEA, LACHEC, etc.). Related topics may include 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.

## D. 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 Mexico;
- Increase numbers of students working in teams to gain skills in the U.S. and in Mexico;
- 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 2020 U.S.-Mexico Innovation Fund Competition is to award up to **eleven (11) Innovation Fund grants of up to \$25,000** to selected proposals, pending the evaluation and selection process. The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, Partners of the Americas, Mary Street Jenkins Foundation, Coca-Cola Foundation, and Sempra Energy 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

Higher education institutions will be notified of the status of grant proposals by **May 31, 2021**. Please note that this date is subject to change and in such cases, Partners of the Americas will inform applicants accordingly.

### 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 – August 31, 2022**. Extension 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, sponsors, 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.

- **Proposal Narrative** in PDF
  - Cover Page (1 page)
  - Table of Contents (1 page)
  - Technical Narrative (10 pages max)
- **Budget** (3 pages max)
  - Summary in Excel format

- Narrative in Word 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 [www.100kstrongamericas.org/app-format/](http://www.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 ([www.100kstrongamericas.org/application-portal/](http://www.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 [www.100kstrongamericas.org/questions](http://www.100kstrongamericas.org/questions). For a comprehensive list of questions received from applicants of previous grant competitions, please visit [www.100kstrongamericas.org/100k-competition-faqs](http://www.100kstrongamericas.org/100k-competition-faqs).

## Section VI: Anticipated Grant Competition Timeline

ACTIVITY	TIME PERIOD*
Launch of 100K Grant Competition	September 17, 2020
Close of 100K Grant Competition	February 15, 2021
Proposals Evaluation Process	February 15 – May 31, 2021
Notification of Status of Proposal	May 31, 2021
Award of Grant Funds to Winners	July – August 2021
Period of Performance for 100K Grants	September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2022

*\*Dates are subject to change.*

## 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](http://www.100kstrongamericas.org/questions). Questions should be received prior to the deadline stipulated on the cover page of this RFP. No phone calls please.