

Sponsor/Title: Department of State (DOS) - FY 2026 U.S. Leadership in Education, Advanced Manufacturing, and Digital Skills (U.S. LEADS) Program

External Link: <https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/361493>

Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0017930

Submission Limitation per Institution: One (1)

Notre Dame Limited Submissions Listing:

<https://research.nd.edu/our-services/funding-opportunities/faculty/limited-submissions-program/>

Internal Expression of Interest Deadline: 2026-03-30

Sponsor Statement of Interest (SOI) Deadline: 2026-05-18

Purpose: U.S. LEADS advances U.S. foreign policy and national interests by strengthening international partnerships with countries strategically important to U.S. industry and supply chains. This Freedom 250 initiative will showcase U.S. innovation and the unique role of community colleges in preparing the 21st-century workforce. The program will share U.S. best practices with key international policymakers focused on vocational-technical education, paving the way for future U.S. trade and investment. The program will also facilitate partnerships that advantage U.S. companies and enhance global competitiveness while building networks between U.S. community colleges, international educational institutions, and industry partners.

Program Specific Guidelines: U.S. LEADS is a comprehensive international exchange program that will engage approximately 100 participants from countries strategically important to U.S. industry and supply chains. The program consists of two integrated components: (1) a Washington, D.C. summit highlighting America's industrial heritage and current leadership in workforce innovation, and (2) regional exchange programs in four U.S. cities showcasing exemplary community college-industry partnerships in advanced manufacturing, AI, and digital skills training. Cohorts will be comprised of approximately 25 participants each. The program should also include capacity-building opportunities for U.S. community colleges designed to further strengthen industry connections and opportunities for global partnership that strengthen U.S. competitiveness.

The program provides participants with practical skills to address emerging labor market demands through immersive experiences in U.S. regions with strong industry-education partnerships. Participants gain direct access to U.S. industry leaders and higher education institutions, creating partnership opportunities with U.S. companies and community colleges that can facilitate U.S. job creation and competitiveness in a global economy. The program expands market access for U.S. companies by aligning emerging economies to U.S. industry and educational standards.

Goals and Objectives:

- *Showcase U.S. Leadership and Commemorate Freedom 250:* Demonstrate American excellence in workforce innovation by highlighting the unique role of community colleges and their industry partnerships while celebrating America's 250th anniversary and 250 years of leadership in industrial and technological innovation.
- *Build U.S. Driven Strategic Partnerships:* Establish relationships between U.S. community colleges, international educational institutions, and industry partners while

equipping approximately 100 international higher education officials, commerce leaders, and policymakers with knowledge, tools, and action plans to implement U.S. workforce innovation models in their home countries.

- *Advance U.S. Economic Interests and Supply Chain Resilience*: Facilitate public-private partnerships and vocational-technical education policies that advantage U.S. companies and enhance global competitiveness while supporting development of skilled workforces in countries strategically important to U.S. industry, manufacturing, and supply chain security.

Internal Application Requirements: Upload the following information to the Google Form at <https://forms.gle/tL8WXJ8V2oKYvHhg9> by the internal deadline:

- Name of the Principal Investigator (PI)
- Project Title
- All ND Collaborators:
 - For each ND Collaborator listed, include name, department or unit, and specific role for this project in three sentences (maximum).
- Project Summary: Three (3) pages (maximum) addressing the following Review Criteria as outlined on page 29, in the NOFO.
 - Quality of the program idea, program management and planning
 - Institutional Capacity and Track Record
 - Multiplier effect
 - Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Questions: Contact Notre Dame Research Limited Submissions at limited@nd.edu.

Unless otherwise noted, all internal applications are due by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on the internal expression of interest deadline.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.