

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: IRPAC reports to the National Director, Office of Service Center Compliance, who is the executive responsible for information reporting and is charged with its system wide planning and improvement. IRPAC is instrumental in providing advice to enhance the IRP Program. Increasing participation by external stakeholders in the planning and improvement of the tax system will help achieve the goals of increasing voluntary compliance and reduction of burden. IRPAC is currently comprised of 20 representatives from various segments of the private sector payer community. IRPAC members are not paid for their time or services, but consistent with Federal regulations, they are reimbursed for their travel and lodging expenses to attend two meetings each year.

DATES: The meeting will be open to the public, and will be in a room that accommodates approximately 90 people, including members of IRPAC and IRS officials. Seats are available to the public on a first-come, first-served basis. In order to get your name on the building access list, *notification of intent to attend this meeting must be made with Ms. Tommie Matthews no later than Friday, May 10, 1996. Ms. Matthews can be reached at 202-622-4214 (not a toll-free number).* Notification of intent to attend should include your name, organization and phone number. If you leave this information for Ms. Matthews in a voice-mail message, please spell out all names. A draft of the agenda will be available via facsimile transmission the week prior to the meeting. Please call Ms. Matthews on or after Monday May 6, 1996 to have a copy of the agenda faxed to you. Please note that a draft agenda will not be available until Monday, May 6.

ADDRESSES: If you would like to have IRPAC consider a written statement at a future IRPAC meeting (not the May 1996 meeting), please write to Kate LaBuda at IRS, Office of Service Center Compliance, CP:CO:SC:P, Room 2013, 1111 Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC, 20224.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: To give notification of intent to attend this meeting, call Ms. Tommie Matthews at 202-622-4214 (not a toll-free number). For general information about IRPAC call Kate LaBuda at 202-622-3404 (not a toll-free number).

Dated: April 18, 1996.
Bob Longford,
(Acting) Director, Office of Payer Compliance,
Service Center Compliance.
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UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Edmund S. Muskie Fellowship Program

ACTION: Notice; request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The Office of Academic Programs, Academic Exchange Programs Division, European Programs Branch of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for an assistance award. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c)(3)-1 may apply to administer the recruitment, selection, placement, monitoring, evaluation, and follow-on activities for the Edmund S. Muskie Fellowship Program. Organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs are not eligible for this competition.

The Edmund S. Muskie Fellowship Program selects outstanding citizens of the New Independent States (NIS) and the Baltics to receive scholarships for Master's-level study and professional development in the United States in the fields of business administration, economics, law, and public administration. Fellowships are awarded to qualified young and mid-career individuals who are citizens of Armenia, Azerbaijan*, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, or Uzbekistan. Interested organizations should read the complete Federal Register announcement and request a Solicitation Package from USIA prior to preparing a proposal.

*Please note: Programs with Azerbaijan are subject to restrictions of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act: Employees of the Government of Azerbaijan or any of its instrumentalities are excluded from participation, and no U.S. participant overseas may work for the Government of Azerbaijan or any of its instrumentalities. In addition, the Government of Azerbaijan or any of its instrumentalities will have no control in the actual selection of participants.

Edmund S. Muskie Fellows enroll in graduate degree, certificate, and non-degree programs lasting one-to-two academic years. It is estimated that

approximately 100-130 Fellows will participate in the 1997 program.

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries * * *; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations * * * and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world."

Programs and projects must conform with Agency requirements and guidelines outlined in the Solicitation Package. USIA projects and programs are subject to the availability of funds.

ANNOUNCEMENT TITLE AND NUMBER: All communications with USIA concerning this announcement should refer to the above title and reference number *E/AEE-97-01*.

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, D.C. time on Thursday, June 20, 1996. Faxed documents will not be accepted, nor will documents postmarked June 20, 1996, but received at a later date. It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that proposals are received by the above deadline.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The Office of Academic Programs, European Programs Branch, E/AEE, Room 246, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, (P)202-205-0525, (F)202-260-7985, (E-Mail) LShane@USIA.gov to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed award criteria, required application forms, and standard guidelines for preparing proposals, including specific criteria for preparation of the proposal budget.

TO DOWNLOAD A SOLICITATION PACKAGE VIA INTERNET: The Solicitation Package may be downloaded from USIA's website at <http://www.usia.gov/> or from the Internet Gopher at gopher.usia.gov. Select "Education and Cultural Exchanges", then select "Current Request for Proposals (RFPs)." Please read "About the Following RFPs" before beginning to download.

Please specify USIA Program Officer/Specialist Laura Shane on all inquiries and correspondence. Interested

applicants should read the complete Federal Register announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the RFP deadline has passed, Agency staff may not discuss this competition in any way with applicants until the Bureau proposal review process has been completed.

SUBMISSIONS: Applicants must follow all instructions given in the Solicitation Package. The original and 14 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/AEE-97-01, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547.

Applicants must also submit the "Executive Summary" and "Proposal Narrative" sections of the proposal on a 3.5" diskette, formatted for DOS. This material must be provided in ASCII text (DOS) format with a maximum line length of 65 characters. USIA will transmit these files electronically to USIS posts overseas for their review, with the goal of reducing the time it takes to get posts' comments for the Agency's grants review process.

DIVERSITY GUIDELINES: Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of American political, social, and cultural life. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including, but not limited to ethnicity, race, gender, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, and physical challenges. Applicants are strongly encouraged to adhere to the advancement of this principle both in program administration and in program content. Please refer to the review criteria under the "Support for Diversity" section for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Overview

The Edmund S. Muskie Fellowship Program is designed to foster democratization and the transition to market economies in the former Soviet Union and Baltic States through intensive academic and professional training. Since the program's inception in fiscal year 1992, over 650 Fellowships have been awarded. The academic component of the program begins in the fall semester of the year of award and follows the normal one- or two-year academic cycle. Fellows take part in eight- to twelve-week internships during the summer following the first academic year. While Fellows are closely assisted in their internship

search by host institutions, sponsoring organizations, and USIA, the primary responsibility for securing appropriate internships remains with the Fellows. Fellows placed in one-year graduate programs return home at the conclusion of their internship. Fellows placed in two-year graduate programs return to their academic placement following the internship. The Muskie Program is not intended as a precursor to doctoral studies in the United States. At the end of their designated academic and internship programs, Fellows are required to return to their home countries.

The Muskie Program includes the fields of business administration, economics, law, and public administration. USIA anticipates that the fields of mass communications/journalism, education administration, library and information science, and public policy may be added to the 1997 Muskie Program. Therefore, organizations should address their abilities to administer the program in these fields as well as the four original Muskie fields.

In the past, the Muskie Program has been administered consorcially by four organizations, working in close partnership for all phases of the program. It is anticipated that decreases in program funding will necessitate that the number of organizations administering the Muskie Program be reduced. Applicant organizations may apply to administer the program individually or via a consorcial arrangement as long as one organization is designated as the recipient of the grant. Organizations may also indicate in their proposals a plan to work cooperatively with one or more applicant organizations. However, organizations must also clearly state their individual capabilities.

Proposing organizations must demonstrate the ability to administer all aspects of the Muskie program—advertisement, recruitment, selection, placement, orientation, fellow monitoring and support, financial management, evaluation, follow-on, and alumni tracking and programming. Applicant organizations should demonstrate the ability to recruit and select a diverse pool of candidates from various geographic regions within the NIS and Baltics. Additionally, organizations will be asked to assist in the recruitment and selection of appropriate host institutions from throughout the United States for pre-academic, ESL, and academic programs. Administering organizations will act as the principal liaison with Muskie host institutions. Additionally, organizations

should demonstrate the ability to work with private sector organizations in the United States, NIS and Baltics to facilitate to Fellows' professional development and post-program re-entry. Further details on specific program responsibilities can be found in the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) Statement which is part of the formal Solicitation Package available from USIA.

Awards will begin on or about October 1, 1996, and will be approximately three years in duration. Initial recruitment and selection activities will be performed by the current administering organizations.

Guidelines

Programs must comply with J-1 visa regulations. Please refer to program specific guidelines (POGI) in the Solicitation Package for further details.

The level of funding for fiscal year 1997 is uncertain; proposal budgets should not exceed \$5 million.

Organizations must submit a comprehensive line item budget based on the specific guidance in the Solicitation Package. There must be a summary budget as well as a breakdown reflecting both the administrative budget and the program budget. Organizations whose proposals include an administrative budget that is less than 20% of the grant amount requested from USIA will be given preference. Detailed guidance on budget preparation is included in the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) statement. Please refer to the complete Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

Review Process

USIA will acknowledge receipt of all proposals and will review them for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. Eligible proposals will be forwarded to panels of USIA officers for advisory review. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the USIA Office of Eastern Europe and NIS Affairs and the USIA posts overseas, where appropriate. Proposals may be reviewed by the Office of the General Counsel or by other Agency elements. Funding decisions are at the discretion of the USIA Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards (grants or cooperative agreements) resides with the USIA grants officer.

Review Criteria

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

(1.) Quality of program plan:

Proposed programs should include academic rigor, thorough conception or project, demonstration of meeting participant needs, contributions to understanding the partner country, proposed alumni activities, specific details of recruitment, selection and monitoring processes, a thorough evaluation plan, proposed follow-on, and relevance to USIA's mission.

(2.) Program planning and institutional capacity: A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution and its staff will meet the program objectives and plan.

(3.) Track record: Relevant USIA and outside assessments of the organization's experience with international exchanges;

(4.) Multiplier effect/impact: The impact of the exchange activity on the wider community and on the development of continuing ties, as well as the contribution of the proposed activity in promoting mutual understanding will be evaluated.

(5.) Value of U.S.-partner country relations: The assessment by USIA's geographic area office of the need,

potential impact, and significance of the project with the partner countries.

(6.) Cost-effectiveness: A key measure of cost-effectiveness is the unit cost to the Agency. This is the total request of USIA monies divided by the number of fellow-months (number of fellows multiplied by the number of program months). The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.

(7.) Cost-sharing: Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

(8.) Diversity and pluralism: Preference will be given to proposals that demonstrate efforts to provide for the participation of students with a variety of major disciplines, from diverse regions, and of different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, to the extent feasible for the applicant institutions. The Agency will seek to achieve maximum geographic diversity in recruitment, selection and placement of participants through its award of grants.

(9.) Follow-on activities: Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity which insures that USIA-supported programs are not isolated events. Proposals should include a plan for alumni tracking and coordination that demonstrates the

willingness to provide data to and coordinate tracking with USIA and USIS Posts overseas.

(10.) Project evaluation: Proposals should provide a plan for evaluation by the grantee institution to determine the success of the project. Special attention should be given to measuring long-term program effectiveness.

Notice

The terms and conditions published in this RFP are binding and may not be modified by any USIA representative. Explanatory information provided by the Agency that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the RFP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Agency reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements.

Notification

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal USIA procedures.

Dated: April 19, 1996.

Dell Pendergrast,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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