

All communications concerning these proceedings should identify the appropriate docket number (e.g., Waiver Petition Docket Number PB-96-2) and must be submitted in triplicate to the Docket Clerk, Office of Chief Counsel, FRA, Nassif Building, 400 Seventh Street S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Communications received within 30 days of the date of this notice will be considered by FRA before final action is taken. Comments received after that date will be considered as far as practicable. All written communications concerning these proceedings are available for examination during regular business hours (9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.) at FRA's temporary docket room located at 1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Room 7051, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Issued in Washington, DC, on December 20, 1996.

Phil Olekszyk,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Compliance and Program Implementation.

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UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Community Connections

ACTION: Notice—request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Russia/Eurasia Division of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces a 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 organize and implement community-based, professional programs for entrepreneurs, legal professionals and government officials from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Belarus, and Georgia. The objective of Community Connections, the successor to Business for Russia, is to enhance the participants' skills in business and entrepreneurship, law, and local governance. USIA is interested in proposals that provide both professional experience and exposure to American life and culture through internships hosted by U.S. business and local governmental and legal institutions, and home stays with local community members. An overall objective of Community Connections is to establish long term lasting relationships among U.S. and international audiences. This program is not academic in nature; rather, it is designed to provide practical, hands-on training in

American business, legal and public sector environments which can be transferred upon an individual's return home. The Agency welcomes innovative proposals which combine elements of professional enrichment, job shadowing and internships appropriate to the language ability and interests of the participants.

Overall grant-making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Laws 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." The funding authority for the program cited above is provided through the *Freedom* Support Act.

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/PN-97-18.

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, D.C. time on Friday, February 28, 1997. Faxed documents will not be accepted, nor will documents postmarked February 28, 1997 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 Citizen Exchanges, Russia/Eurasia Division, E/PN Room 216, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, Phone: (202) 401-6884, fax: (202) 619-4350, internet: vrector@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://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 Michael Weider 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 12 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/PN-97-18, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547.

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

Community Connections seeks to establish and strengthen links between American communities and communities in Russia, Ukraine and Moldova. Contingent upon the availability of funds, we also anticipate expanding the program to include audiences from Armenia, Belarus and Georgia. Community Connections will focus on business (particularly entrepreneurship), the legal profession and its relationship to the administration of justice, and issues of concern for local and regional government. In order to expand the reach and impact of Community Connections, the program will recruit both English speaking participants and participants with little or no English-language skills.

Pending availability of funds, it is anticipated that approximately 1,200 professionals will participate in this cycle of the FY 1997-funded Community Connections program. All participants will be recruited from the selected regions by experienced U.S. organizations with offices in Russia and the other previously mentioned countries. It is anticipated that approximately half of all participants will be from Russia, one third from Ukraine, and the remainder from Moldova, Armenia, Belarus and Georgia.

Guidelines

In order to make the most effective use of the limited financial resources available while, at the same time, maintaining a maximum degree of program flexibility, the Office of Citizen Exchanges asks that interested organizations submit proposals to host no fewer than 30 participants in total. Organizations must host at least one group of participants each from two of the three subject components of the program. In the past, in an effort to minimize administrative expenses, organizations have hosted no fewer than ten participants at any given time. Programs for business people will be from four to five weeks in length; programs for legal professionals will be from three to four weeks in length; and programs for government officials will be from two to three weeks in length. It is anticipated that programs will be conducted between late summer of 1997 and late summer 1998. Care must be taken to allow sufficient time between programs to prepare for the following group. Organizations proposing to develop programs for additional groups of participants beyond the minimum must demonstrate that they have either allowed for sufficient preparatory time between programs or have the necessary human, physical and financial resources to handle any overlap.

Participants will be assigned to U.S. host communities by the Office of Citizen Exchanges based on the following factors: existing ties between the regions of origin of the participants, the locations of the U.S. grantee organizations, the professional interests of the participants, and the areas of strength of U.S. grantee organizations.

A proposal's cost-effectiveness, including in-kind contributions and ability to keep administrative cost low, is a major consideration in the review process. Cost-sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. The Recipient must maintain written records to support all allowable costs which are claimed as being its contribution to cost participation, as well as costs to be paid

by the Federal Government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with OMB Circular A-110 (revised subpart C.23), "Cost-Sharing and Matching" and should be described in the proposal. In the event that the Recipient does not provide the minimum amount of cost-sharing as stipulated in the Recipient's budget, the Agency's contribution will be reduced in proportion to the Recipient's contribution.

Contingent upon the availability of funds from one fiscal year to the next, USIA intends to establish long-term continuing relationships with U.S. organizations which have demonstrated particular expertise in the planning and administration of long standing programs of importance to United States foreign policy, such as Community Connections. Accordingly, USIA reserves the right to extend grant programs found to be effective, by annual amendment for up to three additional fiscal years (not to exceed 5 years total), to provide continued support for this program. At USIA's discretion, organizations may be requested to continue activities for specific audiences or to expand target audiences within the scope of the program (e.g., an organization may be requested to host participants from the same or another discipline—local government, business, or legal profession—from the same or another country included in the program) to meet the changing needs of this program initiative.

The Fulbright-Hays Act, as amended, provides authority to establish long-standing relationships with grantees to further U.S. foreign policy. In recognition of the need to establish such long-term program expertise, an incumbent grantee (which has been found to be effective) may make reference to its current program plans/grant agreement, or incorporate such program by reference and identify any changes, amendments, revisions, improvements, etc. to such current program that it would propose to implement under this solicitation.

Proposed Budget

Organizations must submit a comprehensive line item budget based on the specific guidance in the Solicitation Package. For reference purposes, past programs have averaged a total of \$6,300 for each participant hosted. Please use this figure as a guide when preparing your budget.

Grants awarded to eligible organizations with less than four years

of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to \$60,000.

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 European and NIS Affairs and USIA posts in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Belarus and Georgia. 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:

1. Program planning and ability to achieve objectives: Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate careful and thorough preparation to carry out substantive programs which have a high likelihood of achieving program objectives. Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible.

2. Institutional capability: Organization should demonstrate sufficient skills and experience in hosting visitors from other countries and ability to utilize local business, legal and governmental resources and voluntary support. Thematic expertise in project subject matter must be demonstrated.

3. Cost-effectiveness: 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. Proposals should also maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

4. Support of Diversity: Proposals should demonstrate the recipient's commitment to promoting the awareness and understanding of diversity.

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: December 24, 1996.

Dell Pendergrast,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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