

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY**Provision of Overseas Educational Advising Services Seeking Partnerships; Call for Concept Papers**

SUMMARY: The Office of Academic Programs of the United States Information Agency's (USIA) Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an opportunity to create public/private sector partnerships with USIA in order to ensure the long-term viability of educational advising centers abroad which provide information on and facilitate access to U.S. institutions of higher education to overseas audiences. Because of the important role of these centers in achieving the United States' educational exchange and foreign policy objectives, USIA is committed to maintaining comprehensive and objective educational advisory services to overseas audiences. Recent budget reductions, however, have limited the operational, material and training support that USIA can offer to the network of overseas educational advising centers. USIA is seeking outside funding, contributions and creative solutions to continue providing educational advising services in cooperation with United States Information Service (USIS) posts abroad. USIA invites public and private, for-profit and not-for-profit organizations with significant substantive experience in international education to submit statements of interest for collaborating with USIA and USIS posts abroad. Limited support for initiatives may be available, depending on the specific circumstances of the advising program in each country, the interest and requirements of individual USIS posts, and the availability of funds.

Background Information*Advising and Student Services*

The Advising and Student Services Branch (E/ASA) of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs promotes the international exchange of students and scholars through a network of educational advising centers located overseas and through partnership with the international education community in the United States. The Branch works toward strengthening the infrastructure for the administration of international educational exchange and facilitates cooperation between educational advisers overseas and their counterparts at U.S. academic institutions. The Branch provides material support for

advising centers within the USIA network in the form of books, other reference materials and appropriate equipment, as well as staff training and professional development opportunities through training in the U.S., overseas workshops and conferences, and services offered by Regional Educational Advising Coordinators.

Overseas Educational Advising Centers

The educational advising centers in the USIA network, located in nearly every country in the world, provide foreign audiences, including prospective students and scholars, with the information they need to understand the U.S. higher education system, and, if appropriate, to apply for admission to a U.S. college or university. Centers can be found in a wide variety of institutions, including U.S. embassies, Fulbright commissions, local universities, private foundations, U.S. non-profit organizations with operations overseas, and other local institutions. USIA provides operational support for some of these centers; but all centers receive at least a minimum level of material support. Topics for which information is readily available at a center include:

- profiles of U.S. higher education institutions, including course descriptions
- application procedures and strategies
- financial assistance options
- information on standardized tests required for admission such as TOEFL
- information on secondary education in the U.S.

Range of Participation

USIA is seeking non-governmental organizations to collaborate in one or more of the following types of activities:

(A) Under direction of the USIS post, to accept responsibility for all or part of the operation of an overseas educational advising center currently operated by the post.

(B) To establish a cooperative relationship with a Fulbright commission, a host-country institution or a USIS post in support of a new or existing educational advising activity.

(C) To contribute material, technological, staffing or other support to ongoing advising operations.

(D) To contribute to professional development programs for advisers.

Operational Standards

I. USIA requires advising centers within its network to adhere to the following basic principles:

(A) They should provide impartial, accurate information about the full range of accredited institutions of higher

learning in the United States and must not serve as agents or recruiters. Ethical standards of appropriate professional associations must be followed.

(B) They should provide, at no charge, access to essential reference materials and to an introductory advising session, which may be a group or video presentation.

II. If an advising center decides to offer fee-based services, the following principles also apply:

(A) All services beyond the introductory level may be provided for a fee that is in accordance with the local market and laws. These services might include one-on-one advising, transcript evaluations, translations, pre-departure orientations, and specialized workshops.

(B) Services may be provided to U.S. colleges, universities and schools (e.g., college fairs, assistance in logistical arrangements for recruitment) provided that the center maintains impartiality and continues to present the full range of accredited U.S. academic institutions. Fees may be charged for these services.

(C) Students who are clearly not qualified for U.S. study, i.e., lack financial resources, English language ability, and/or sufficient academic preparation, should not be offered fee-based services.

(D) Centers may recruit sponsors for specific activities, provided solicitation is done in coordination with the local USIS post.

Announcement Title and Number

All communications with USIA concerning this announcement should refer to the above title and reference number E/ASA-97-11.

Submissions

Organizations wishing to pursue collaborative activities as described above should prepare a concept paper, not to exceed five pages. This paper should include the following information:

(A) Name and address of organization(s).

(B) Principal contact information (name, phone/fax numbers, e-mail address).

(C) Outline of organization's history, mission, and scope.

(D) Brief description of organization's involvement with U.S. and foreign higher educational systems, educational exchange, and overseas educational advising and/or other services.

(E) Resources (human, financial, in-kind etc.) which applicant organization proposes to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the educational advising program.

(F) Countries or regions of interest.

(G) Scope of proposed activity.

The original and five copies of the concept paper, along with the same information on a 3.5" diskette in ASCII text format, should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/ASA-97-11, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547.

USIA will use the electronic submissions to transmit concept papers to appropriate USIS posts for their review and comment.

Deadline for Submission

All concept papers must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, D.C. time on July 25, 1997. Faxed documents will not be accepted at any time. Documents postmarked July 25 but received at a later date will not be accepted.

Review Process

USIA will review concept papers using as criteria the degree to which the applicant organization demonstrates:

- Experience with U.S. and foreign higher education systems;
- Significant involvement in international educational exchange, in the U.S. or abroad;

—Commitment to the mission of overseas educational advising and to maintaining operational and ethical standards;

—Experience in the provision of educational services overseas;

—Ability to provide a financial base for advising and related operations abroad.

All eligible concept papers will be reviewed by a panel that may include the program office and USIA geographic area offices where appropriate to recommend those that should be approved for further consideration by USIS posts. Statements may also be reviewed by the Office of the General Counsel or by other Agency elements. Recommended concept papers will be shared with appropriate USIS posts. E/ASA will facilitate communication between submitters and USIS posts. Further action on concept papers will depend upon USIS post requirements and will involve E/ASA's oversight. Discussions between USIS post and submitter may lead to the negotiation of a formal agreement with the submitter. It is anticipated that agreements will be executed by January 1, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

The Advising and Student Services Branch, E/ASA, Rm. 349, U.S.

Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, telephone 202-619-5434; fax 202-401-1433; e-mail Advise@usia.gov. Contact officer is Amy Forest.

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ON DEMAND: This announcement may be requested from the Bureau's Grants Information Fax on Demand System, which is accessed by calling (202) 401-7616. The Table of Contents listing available documents and order numbers should be the first order when entering the system.

TO DOWNLOAD THIS ANNOUNCEMENT VIA

INTERNET: This announcement may be downloaded from USIA's website at <http://www.usia.gov/> or from the Internet Gopher at <gopher://gopher.usia.gov>. Under the heading "International Exchanges/Training," select "Request for Proposals (RFPs)." Please read "About the Following RFPs" before downloading.

Dated: April 23, 1997.

Dell Pendergrast,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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